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# VAIN FOREBODINGS

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BY MRS. A. L. WISTER

TRANSLATOR OF "A PENNILESS GIRL" "HANNED AND BLESSED" "QUICKSANDS" ETC.

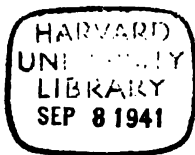
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near to us  
winter,  
of spring-time,  
hood.  
round thee  
and smiling,  
ring tree-tops  
hast buried,  
hood!

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# VAIN FOREBODINGS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### DARKENED SKIES.

THE junior officers of an Uhlan regiment were sitting together after mess over a bowl of claret-cup. They were inaugurating a new set of glasses, presented to them by their colonel, Konsky, upon the occasion of his promotion to the rank of general, and his removal to a distant post. The glasses were of costly Bohemian manufacture, with decanters to match, and the cipher of the regiment cut on each piece. The gentlemen thought the shallow cups delightful to drink from. And there was nothing to be desired in the quality of what filled them, for the tall lad, Jol Plessin, who had brewed the mixture, and whose birthday was thus celebrated, understood such matters thoroughly. The entertainment had reached its height, mess had been served at four o'clock, and it was just striking nine.

Plessin, the hero of the hour, was leaning back, half asleep, his cigar held between two fingers of



the hand that hung down over the arm of the crimson plush easy-chair in which he had ensconced himself, in one of the deep recesses of the windows. He, with the exception of the youngest lieutenant, jolly little Tettau, was the only one present in the least affected by the wine that had been drunk.

The rest did far less honour than usual to their wine, and there was a marked absence of the fun and merriment natural at the years of the company. The gorgeous silver bowl in its crystal setting of ice was more than two-thirds full, and the table, cleared of everything save the dessert, showed none of the litter and confusion of a prolonged entertainment.

"You can consider yourselves off duty for the present," Count Buchberg said to the orderlies in waiting. "Bring the cigars here, Gutmann, and be careful to close the doors after you, or we shall have that infernal draught in the room."

"Better too much than too little caution in such matters," he added in a lower tone, when the men had departed. "If the matter is to be discussed,—it really is not a suitable topic for a wine-party,—at least it need not be spoken of before a dozen or so of superfluous ears. And, Quitzov, let me entreat you to cheer up."

The man whom he addressed, and who had returned only an hour or two previously from a two-months' leave of absence, was evidently much

distressed in mind, and now covered his glass with his hand when Buchberg would have filled it. "Not a drop, Lutz! For Heaven's sake tell me what is truth and what mere idle rumour in this terrible story? I am utterly knocked up by it. Why could not some one of you have written a line to me at Lubowitz? It was hardly fair of you not to do it. I drove here from the station to your wine-party utterly unconscious, my head full of nonsense to be detailed for your amusement, and, by heaven, after what I have heard I cannot drink a drop."

"Don't fly into a passion, my dear Quitzov," Buchberg rejoined; "we could scarcely write to you at Lubowitz concerning the Kaldenhoff affair, since it only occurred the day before yesterday, and took us all by surprise." He glanced towards two or three of the youngest men, who were just preparing to play a harmless trick upon the sleeper Plessin, and went on: "Believe me, Heinz, the less said about it before the present company the better. Come to my rooms for an hour, and I will give you every detail."

"No, no; if you will not tell me now, I shall go directly home, Lutz," said Quitzov, and his lips trembled with emotion, to conceal which he repeatedly stroked his long, fair moustache. "Otto's misfortune concerns us all; every one of us likes him, but I, as his nearest friend, have a right to know the whole truth. And I—I am in no con-

dition to stay here if you persist in tormenting me with your confounded hints and innuendoes."

Lutz Buchberg shrugged his shoulders. He knew that Quitzov, when once irritated, was entirely inaccessible to reason, and when he further insisted, "We are entirely by ourselves, and honour would seal our lips elsewhere," he said quietly, "Very well, then. The affair stands thus. About four weeks ago Kaldenhoff insisted upon announcing his betrothal; you must have received your notice in Lubowitz. He sent his cards everywhere, and drove and took horseback-rides with the lady. We saw nothing more of him at the club, and he would listen to no word of caution. I had the honour of meeting the couple but once,—at the Privy Councillor's,—and it cost me an effort merely to pay my formal respects upon the occasion."

"And his parents?"

"Oh, they conducted themselves just as one would have supposed they would. His father was much too agitated and blind to have any clear ideas upon the subject, and his mother, in spite of her reserve of character, was carried away by the desire to see her Benjamin, her idol, happy in his own way. And the fair betrothed knew perfectly well how to insinuate herself into their good graces; she even went once, to please her mamma-in-law, to church, where she yawned so behind her prayer-book from beginning to end of the service that it

was positively infectious. She sang, moreover, like a nightingale; and her eyes!—violet eyes they call them,—you know the kind. Her aunt, too, played her part well, and took airs of refinement upon herself,—heaven only knows where she got them! However, at the twelfth hour a mythical cousin from Russian Poland made his appearance upon the scene as a *Deus ex machina*. He indited the usual letter to Kaldenhoff: early attachment—previous engagement—unfortunate mistake—and all the rest of it, and she, who had apparently made use of Kaldenhoff as a spur ‘to prick the sides of the intent’ of the other lover, who had been fighting shy, added a few heartless lines, and the whole party packed up and disappeared from town.”

“I can’t understand,” said Quitzov, looking puzzled, “why Otto did not challenge the scoundrel.”

“Who could challenge a blackguard like that?” Buchberg rejoined. “There could be no idea of anything of the kind; and besides, two hours after Kaldenhoff received the letter it took three hospital nurses to hold him down in bed.”

“Good God! You have not seen the letter?”

“But I have seen it. I was lounging in the Club when the thing happened. Poor old Kaldenhoff, who had been sent for, came to me, whom he knew best, in his distress, and he showed me the letter, d—n it!”

“Rascals!” Quitzov ejaculated, under his breath,

pushing his glass away from him. "Go on, Lutz, go on!"

"Yes, they took good care to point the sting in every direction for the poor fellow. I am afraid there's nothing for him save to leave the country upon a long leave, or—and this seems to me likeliest—to throw up his commission."

"Never! That *we* must prevent!" Quitzov interrupted him. "Let us interest the colonel in the affair, Lutz. If he is not our grand old Konsky, he seems to be a very good kind of fellow, and he is amazingly well thought of by the government. We must upon no account lose Otto."

"I doubt the possibility of any prevention or interference of ours here, Heinz," Buchberg replied. "Unfortunately, most unfortunately," he added, in a whisper, leaning forward towards Quitzov, "there are grave fears in this respect." And he tapped his forehead with his forefinger.

Quitzov started back with an exclamation of distress so emphatic that for a moment it interrupted the lively talk of the young officers at the other end of the table. "Insane? Great God, Lutz! Impossible! Is that what that ass Villers says? Of course; it sounds like his nonsense. I wouldn't trust him to treat a cold in the head, let alone an illness of any consequence. You must contrive to have them see R—. Ask your mother to go to the Countess to-morrow. Do arrange it, Lutz!"

"Oh, you see, Villers, like all ignorant fools, is so puffed up with himself and his wisdom," said Buchberg. "He has made his diagnosis from a simple attack of nervous fever with delirium, and he stands to it like the obstinate ass that he is. But old Kaldenhoff is perfectly infatuated with the man and his nostrums, and will not hear of any other advice. Of course I will do my best to have R—— called in. All I know I learned indirectly through him; he paid my mother a visit to-day, and he considers the case a very grave one——"

"Lutz, Lutz, for heaven's sake don't talk so! Otto must recover!" Quitzov exclaimed, running his hands through his fair curls. "The wisest physicians make mistakes sometimes. But how in the name of the devil could Otto fall in love with that creature,—he, with more sense in his little finger than I have in my entire body. There was nothing in her,—an adventuress to her very finger-tips——"

"Oho! hold in, driver; not too fast with your young horses!" cried Hans Tettau, a handsome, beardless boy, with bright eyes, at the other end of the table. "What do you mean by adventuress? She had a superb figure, and *chic* enough for a dozen of our washed-out girls, and she knew how to talk to a fellow, I can tell you. And then her name had a feudal ring,—Jadwija von Czar—Czardos—what was the last syllable? Well, it's all the same whether it ended in 'ky' or 'ka.' At any

rate, we all, every one of us, envied Kaldenhoff his luck."

"I beg you to make *me* an exception to that last statement, Tettau," Buchberg remarked; and then, when a dozen voices took up the theme, he went on in an undertone to Quitzov: "In fact, the boy is not so very far wrong; she was a most seductive creature, and ready to spread her nets for all; but, for her honour's sake, I trust that I do exaggerate her fault, and that after her fashion she had a regard for Kaldenhoff. Still, does not experience teach us that in such women the original nature is sure to triumph in the end? She was an inborn coquette, and was no exception to the rule. She exerted all her art to bring the handsomest man in town to her feet, and she succeeded. But as soon as she discovered that he was something more than only the handsomest man, that his aims in life were not in the least superficial, as were her own, and that as her future lord and master he would surely require of her more than she was disposed to give, she shook off her rosy chains, turned to another more compliant lover, and left the consequences of her treachery in the hands of Providence, and the material for a modern romance to whoever chooses to make use of it."

"How can a man of your rank deign to account for the actions of such a creature?" Quitzov exclaimed indignantly. "Such infamous conduct as

hers is absolutely too disgusting to be discussed by respectable people." He brought his clinched fist down upon the table. "She ought to have been disposed of with rat-poison; and even that would be too good for her. I wish she had tried her little game with me."

"Sitting under shelter it is easy to philosophize over the rain," Buchberg rejoined. "I have sometimes thought that the causes of this sudden rupture are deeper than we imagine. I confess that I am of those who cannot but remember that a woman, although erring, is a woman still, and that she can never quite relinquish her claim to be judged leniently. Suppose Kaldenhoff thought fit to enlighten his betrothed as to what he calls the 'curse of his family,' and his own dread of it, by which, as you know, he has sometimes been possessed,—might not such revelations have terrified a sensitive woman and have estranged her from him?"

"You talk like a book, and I wish I could be convinced by you," said Quitzov; and his friend, who knew perfectly how well he was talking, filled his glass and sipped it reflectively, with a self-satisfied smile upon his plain but clever face.

"I should think a knowledge of the bare facts would carry conviction," he continued, leaning back comfortably, as if delivering an easy lecture. "A hundred other women might probably have regarded it as the sacred duty of their lives to rid



Kaldenhoff of his superstition, but to play the part of guardian angel requires intense power of self-devotion in a female form,—the heroic mothers of tragedy, the heroines of mediæval romance,—there was no such force in the blood of that born coquette. I always knew that such a brutal blow, however, must prostrate Kaldenhoff. The stouter the tree the heavier the fall. And now, Heinz, let us have done with the subject. I have nothing more to tell you about it."

He rose and went to the other end of the room to light his cigar. There some of the younger officers engaged him in a sporting discussion, and Quitzov remained alone and in silence, leaning his head upon his hand.

He was greatly affected by the fate of this his nearest friend, a man only two years his senior. Neither of Kaldenhoff's two brothers, so said report, had died a natural death. The members of his family had for generations been known as eccentric, and the Countess, his mother, originally a 'Liebezahl,' belonged to a race the men of which had gained for themselves the appellation in which they rather took pride,—'the mad Liebezahls.' Otto Kaldenhoff had often said to Heinz Quitzov, in the midst of some merry hour, "Yes, here I sit laughing with you, Heinz; but remember what I say, my fate will overtake me before my thirtieth birthday." His twenty-seventh had not yet passed,

and the melancholy foreboding seemed to have become tragic fact.

The talk grew general; half-past ten struck, and, outside, the April rain, mixed with large, moist snow-flakes, dashed heavily against the window-panes. The wind from the harbour blew so fiercely that it stirred the hanging folds of the heavy curtains.

Gradually all, even Tettau and two very boyish ensigns, were infected by the serious mood of the elder officers. No one ventured upon the usual toast, 'Woman, the service, and our steeds;' and if they had indulged in flowers of speech, they must have been passion-flowers and nightshade. Various stories of tragic adventure were told, suiting but ill with the material comfort and brilliancy of the surroundings. The two chandeliers filled the room with dazzling light, the fire on the hearth crackled and flamed, and the rings of smoke shaped by skilful smokers floated upwards to the painted garlands of the ceiling.

At last, Plessin, the giver of the entertainment, arose. He came quietly out of his corner, where he had apparently been dozing, shook and stretched himself, held out a tumbler to the bowl on the table, and protested in the interest of his birthday against the doleful mood that prevailed. They had much better drink to poor Kaldenhoff's health; it would be far more sensible than the indulgence in such

fruitless melancholy. He proposed a brimmer to his 'better luck next time.'

The men rose and clinked their glasses. Tettau declared that the toast should be drunk with a most harmonious 'three times three,' in which he himself joined most inharmoniously.

At this point the startled face of an orderly appeared at the door. A hand thrust him aside, parted the folds of the portière, and Otto Kaldenhoff entered the room.

His comrades were thunderstruck. Little Tettau alone, who had taken rather more wine than was good for him, called out, "Ah, Kaldenhoff! This is fine! You were the only one wanting, by heaven! More glasses, orderly!"

The rest bade him be quiet; Lutz Buchberg begged that there might not be so much noise, pushed aside the bowl and the glasses, and sent away the orderly. Quitzov had hastened to his friend, and, without a word, laid his hand upon his shoulder.

Kaldenhoff remained standing near the door, his hand clutching the folds of the portière as if he were dizzy, and surveyed his comrades with an uncertain glance. His handsome young face looked changed and haggard, his splendid figure was unsteady. He appeared to hear nothing of the excited whispers around the table, 'What shall we do?' 'Send instantly for Villers, or for the Count.'

‘No, no; let him alone.’ ‘Don’t have a scene. Wait, wait!’

Over his uniform he had flung his fur cloak, upon which the large snow-flakes were rapidly melting. This he now let slip carelessly from his shoulders upon the floor, showing a worn jacket without shoulder-straps; his sabre, loosely buckled on, hung against tight riding-trousers and dragoon-boots without spurs. This costume was strangely crowned by a full-dress czapka, the long hair plume of which was dripping wet.

He threw off Quitzov’s arm, removed his czapka, tossed it upon his cloak on the floor, and slowly brushed his black, waving hair aside from his forehead. Then he strode to the other end of the table, filled a glass to the brim from the bowl, and held it up before him without drinking.

“Why did you leave me out of your entertainment, Plessin? Did you think I kept no record of birthdays?” he asked, and his voice, usually low and melodious, sounded hard and metallic. “Are you afraid, my boy, to be called to account?—or— or—— What are you staring at? What the devil is the matter with you?”

“For heaven’s sake, Plessin, be quiet! he does not know what he is saying!” whispered Buchberg, as Plessin, thoroughly sobered by his dismay, would have made some hasty reply. Then gently taking Kaldenhoff’s arm, he tried vainly to induce him to

sit down. "Come, my dear Kaldenhoff, sit down and be comfortable. I suppose they did not give you Plessin's invitation. We knew you were ill——"

"I—comfortable? Ill?" Kaldenhoff replied, throwing off Buchberg's hand, and placing his glass on the table as he grasped the hilt of his sword. "Who dares to require the one or to maintain the other of me? Who has any right, any moral obligation, in this chaos of rogues? No, no, not that,—a chaos of adders. We have some idea of honour, we men; we keep our word *coûte que coûte*; we deserve to live, and we *will* live to destroy all women. Whoever of you is married or betrothed, leave the room; I am going to pass sentence upon adders,—the sentence of the world and the judgment of God. I cite you as witnesses, gentlemen. But I wish to wound no man because I happen to be hurt. Hurt, do I say? Who utters such nonsense? Simply slain, annihilated, there is a desolate waste within me; room enough for the universe, for Sahara, for an Eden, with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why should it be empty—this waste? You do not answer; you are afraid of me," he interrupted himself, and his eyes flashed fire. "Not one of you, cowards that you are, has the courage to declare his personal opinion."

"This is too much! No one can be asked to bear it," Tettau exclaimed indignantly; but the unfor-

fortunate man, after violently repulsing Quitzov's effort to induce him to lay aside his weapon, went on wildly, without noticing the interruption, his hand still on the hilt of his sabre: "I will fell to the earth him among you who contradicts me by a single syllable; but whoever joins me in revenge upon the adder's brood shall receive the accolade as a *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*. Who will enter the lists with me? Room for all noble-minded men! Do you know what women are? Just this." He held up his glass again, and gazed at it with wild eyes, and with a low laugh that was painful to hear. "Look! look! and laugh with me, gentlemen! See how it sparkles to rejoice the heart of man. But try to put it to your lips, and—there lies your joy!" He poured the wine over the table-cloth, and crushed the delicate glass in his hand, which was so cut in the act that the blood dripped from his fingers. At sight of this, and at the sound made by the clinking fragments as he tossed them from him, he trembled convulsively and his eyes dilated. "Just so they cut you to the very heart, and you bleed to death! But"—and he went on, louder and louder, resisting all efforts of his friends to restrain him, as the paroxysm of madness reached its height—"but there still exist Scourges of God, archangels who can crush the serpent's head, shatter the vile vessel, and hurl it into the pit! I take this sacred duty upon

my shoulders,—mine alone. The strength of Titans and of Giants is mine. What are these things doing here? Away with the rubbish! To hell with them!"

And before he could be prevented he had torn his sabre from the scabbard, waved it in the air, and swept it round among the wineglasses and goblets, crushing them in all directions, while the wine streamed over the floor.

Buchberg and Plessin threw themselves upon him, and fortunately succeeded in disarming him. Quitzov sent one of the orderlies, who rushed into the room with terror, for Dr. Villers, the regimental surgeon, because he was nearest at hand. After superhuman exertions, his comrades succeeded in restraining the unfortunate man. His cries and struggles subsided, until at last he lay prostrate, like a felled oak, and was carried in an unconscious state to a lounge in the billiard-room.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE HEREDITARY CURSE.

THERE he lay as if dead. His comrades stood round him in melancholy silence until the staff surgeon arrived.

He shook his head sapiently; he was not fond of superfluous words, and requested Buchberg to retire for a moment with him to the deserted dining-hall, since he seemed, of all those present, best able to give a clear account of what had occurred.

"You, Count," he said, when they returned to the billiard-room, "will remain here to see that your orderlies and the servants are cautioned against all gossip; I will take upon myself the transportation of the sick man to his home. My carriage is waiting, and I will ask one of the gentlemen to be kind enough to drive with us, that he may be at hand in case Count Kaldenhoff should become restless on the way."

Quitsov and Plessin both insisted upon going, and Buchberg as an additional precaution directed one of the orderlies to mount on the box with the coachman, while Tettau, whose handsome boyish face was pale with dismay, handed into the carriage



a wet napkin for the burning temples of the unconscious man.

"Good-night, gentlemen; I shall never, while I live, forget this birthday of mine," said Plessin, as his comrades crowded around the carriage with friendly questions, and offers of assistance; and, by way of emphasis to his words, he closed the carriage-door so energetically that he startled even himself.

Those left behind soon went their ways. Buchberg stayed longer than any one, and took all suitable measures to prevent the circulation of exaggerated rumours. The orderlies swept up the broken glass in the dining hall, drank the dregs of the wine, and abused their superiors for forbidding all mention of the exciting scene they had witnessed.

Meanwhile, Dr. Villers's vehicle drove slowly through the fast falling snow to the Kaldenhoff villa, whither Otto had gone from his own rooms when he was first taken ill. It stood at the end of a broad street, not far from the principal drive on the ramparts of the city, and even in the distance lights could be seen flitting from window to window of the first story.

When the carriage stopped, Quitzov, by the physician's directions, went alone into the house. He hurried through the opened door, past the servant, and up the broad staircase, to prepare the Countess for what had occurred.

He met her in the corridor, a lighted candle in her hand, followed by her son's body-servant, who looked quite ghastly with terror. The Countess's face was ashy pale, and her mental anxiety was plain upon her regular features, usually so coldly calm.

"Herr von Quitzov, where is Otto?" she called out to the young man, without noticing his greeting. "My husband has been gone to look for him for an hour. Good God! we are in despair. Karl was sitting beside his master's bed, when Otto sent him down to supper in the kitchen,—he seemed calm and quiet at noon,—and now——"

"He is here, madame; Villers has brought him in his carriage," Quitzov replied, with all the composure he could muster. "He has had an attack at our supper-party——"

"An attack? At a supper-party? I do not understand——" she interrupted him, giving the light to the servant, and taking Quitzov's arm, quite unable to stand without support. "I beseech you, Herr von Quitzov, do not spare me; tell me the worst, at once!"

Quitzov tugged at his collar with his free hand, —the thing was intolerably tight.

"Yes, he came to our mess-room quite unexpectedly towards eleven o'clock," he stammered. "Plessin was celebrating his birthday, and of course we had not the slightest idea of seeing Kaldenhoff. We were half dead with terror. You

must prepare yourself for the worst, madame. He was raving,—delirious——” he corrected himself, for at the cry that burst from the mother’s lips he could have bit his tongue out for his thoughtlessness.

She hurried down the stairs before him, feeling for the rail of the balustrade with an uncertain hand. As he hastened to try to support her, she took his hand, put it to her face, and sobbed against it,—a desperate, tearless sob. It went to his heart like a knife, and he said to himself that he would rather face the fiercest fire in battle than be sent again upon an errand like this.

When they reached the door and issued from it into the storm, they found the physician and Plessin, with the help of the orderly, taking Otto from the carriage. The horses would not stand; it was an anxious moment, but fortunately the sick man was quiet from exhaustion. His eyes wandered aimlessly hither and thither from beneath their heavy lids, and the head leaning upon Plessin’s shoulder burned with fever. But when his mother held out her arms to him, he shuddered and raised his clinched fist.

“It is only his delirium, madame; I implore you not to feel it so terribly!” said Quitzov, again offering her his arm to conduct her up the staircase, following the melancholy little procession. She made no reply, and he longed ardently to give this poor mother some proof of his sincere sympathy.

"Count upon me, always. I will do everything for Otto and for you!" he said warmly, and a mist came over his honest eyes, so that he saw but dimly the staircase with its broad landing, and the black, trailing gown of his companion, who, since her children's death, had never laid aside her mourning.

"God bless you, my dear,—my dear!" the Countess whispered, and then tears came to her relief, and she wept uncontrollably. Her maid appeared and led her mistress away, while Quitzov betook himself to Otto's room.

Here all was quiet; Kaldenhoff had been put to bed, and Dr. Villers was about to leave, having sent for a nurse from the hospital. As Plessin and Quitzov stood by the bed they thought their friend unconscious, when suddenly he turned his face towards them and said, in a sharp, metallic voice, "I am now dead, dead to all of you, but I beg you hold me in honourable remembrance. Do not break my sabre, and be careful—be careful—not to touch the glass!"

They would have taken his hand in token of farewell, but this seemed to agitate him so that Dr. Villers motioned to them to leave the room immediately.

Outside on the landing they met the Countess with the nurse. They stepped respectfully aside, and without a word, her face like marble in its grief, she passed them and went to her son's room.

"Niobe!" Quitzov said to himself involuntarily, and the comparison brought the relief of an objective direction to his mind. He abruptly declined Plesin's invitation to go somewhere and drink a quiet glass of beer. "I have an infernal headache," he said, and turned the corner towards his rooms.

There he found Lutz Buchberg awaiting him, and desiring a minute account of the arrival at the Kaldenhoffs'. "I am really too utterly knocked up, Lutz, and at a quarter of seven I must be in that cursed riding-school again!" he said, when he had told all the principal details, and he rang for his servant. "It is nearly three o'clock. Make yourself comfortable and at home, and order a bowl of punch if you like. I must go to bed. Such excitements are too much for me. Johann will get you either the rum or the brandy; he knows where everything is, and he has finished his unpacking. This is a fine ending of my pleasant leave, and the very last thing I should have dreamed of. I declare to you upon my honour, Buchberg, if I thought my good mother would ever have to pass through such agony on my account, I'd put a bullet through my brains."

"There's not the slightest logic in what you say," Buchberg replied; "but I know what you mean. I'll take my departure; so good-night, old fellow. Take a glass of soda, and let Johann brew the punch for himself."

"Good-night; you cannot ask logic of any man at three in the morning," was the rejoinder.

When the door had closed upon Buchberg, Quitzov lay for a while flat on his back on the lounge, staring at the ceiling, until at last he drew a long sigh, and said aloud, "Poor woman!—by God—poor, wretched woman!"

And then Johann roused him to ask whether the Herr Lieutenant had any further orders, and his good-natured master dismissed the weary servant for the night.

The next day straw was laid down in the street in front of the Kaldenhoff villa; the knocker was tied up, and most of the fine equipages that were wont to throng this elegant quarter of the town turned aside and drove to the ramparts by another street. Young Count Otto lay mortally ill with 'nervous fever,' people said. In 'society,' of course, the cause of the illness was freely discussed. In spite of the kindly reticence of Otto's comrades and of Buchberg's orders to the servants, the events that had occurred at Plessin's birthnight festivity were widely talked of outside the club-house. Although the Countess had a reputation for great reserve, people vied with one another at first in exaggerated expressions of sympathy. The footman could scarcely satisfy the constant inquiries as to the young Count's condition. Afterwards, when it was thought that the unfortunate parents con-

founded this sympathy with curiosity, people refrained with exaggerated conscientiousness from all inquiries; the only exception to this course was the small circle of fellow-officers whose favourite Otto had been.

While the members of this circle were sitting at mess the day following the birthnight-party, a letter from old Count Kaldenhoff was handed to Lutz Buchberg. It contained the heartfelt entreaty, on the part of the Count, that the comrades and friends of his unfortunate son would forgive and forget every offensive expression used by him on the previous evening, whatever fate heaven might have in store for the poor fellow.

Buchberg read the letter aloud; it was most touching in its brevity and simplicity. Then he arose, glass in hand, and said, this time inspired by a nobler sentiment than pride in his oratorical powers, "Fill your glasses, gentlemen, and let us drink Kaldenhoff's health once more. Long may it be before there is any need for cherishing his memory. He shall not be dead for us, as he fears, but shall arise fresh and strong to consecrate anew, in his own estimation, the sword which he thinks he has desecrated."

All joined with emotion in this toast, and when dinner was over, Buchberg himself waited upon Count Kaldenhoff to assure him of the sincere sympathy of himself and his brother-officers.

Returning from the villa, he met Quitzov riding on the ramparts. "I know now what a hard task you had yesterday, Heinz," he said, as Quitzov turned his horse and walked it beside him. "The misery of those wretched parents lies like lead upon my soul."

Quitzov bit his lip, frowned, and gazed up into the budding boughs of the beeches. "What does Villers call the disease now?" he asked.

"Acute mania," Buchberg replied. "I tell you this,—it must go no further."

"Of course not. Acute mania,—it sounds terrible. And you feel positive that this time Villers has made no mistake in his diagnosis?"

"Positive; besides, I have it from R——, who is in consultation, and whom I met just now."

"Acute mania! Poor fellow! and what chance has he?"

"Every chance, as soon as his good constitution shall have conquered the shock."

"Good God, Buchberg! you do not believe that yourself. Think of the disadvantage under which a man labours who is known to have been out of his senses."

"Nonsense, Heinz! Do have a little more sense yourself. Disease is disease. The time when a temporary derangement of mind was considered a disgrace is happily long past. No cultivated man would cling to such a prejudice nowadays."



“Granted; but the consciousness of it will always be infernally disagreeable for himself.”

“Oh, for the matter of that, the consciousness of pock-marks is infernally disagreeable,” rejoined Buchberg dryly; and then the pair arranged that Quitzov, who lived near the Kaldenhoff villa, should make daily inquiries there as to Otto’s condition.

## CHAPTER III.

### A RIFT IN THE CLOUD.

DR. VILLERS and his distinguished colleague could not, with all their eloquence, persuade the parents of their raving patient to allow him to be transferred from the villa to the hospital. The Countess placed the entire first story of the mansion at the disposal of the physicians and their assistants. They might reign there with absolute authority,—cushion the walls, put iron bars on the windows, provide the carved folding-doors with iron clamps and bolts,—anything, everything, rather than separate the parents from their sole surviving child. Upon this point no reasoning was of any avail.

“Not to the hospital! Not to a mad-house!” On this she insisted, and her weaker husband supported her in her resolution, which she carried through, and the physicians made the best arrangements possible for the case.

For weeks the Countess was not allowed to enter the sick-room. Wasted to a shadow, she would glide trembling to the doors and listen there, with hands clasped in mortal agony, to the wild ravings

on the other side of those bolts and bars, hungering in vain for a sight of her son.

At last her longing was satisfied. The time came when the demon of disease no longer raged, and the physicians began to speak of courage and hope. The attendants, whose united strength had at first scarcely availed to restrain the patient, were one by one dismissed, the great R—— discontinued his visits, and Dr. Villers, the richer by another experience, was the sole authority in command.

Now began the mother's unwearied ministrations. She sat, her Bible on the reading-desk before her, in the arm-chair beside the bed upon which lay her son, helpless as a child.

Without, May was everywhere. The avenues were decked in freshest green, and the deep blue of the distant harbour contrasted with the yellowish brown of the river-mouth, out of which the white-sailed vessels glided on sunny afternoons. Landaus and dog-carts rolled along the streets, and promenaders bound for the ramparts thronged past the Kaldenhoff villa, talking gayly. Existence was a joy, and every one was discussing plans of summer travel.

In the garden of the neighbouring villa merry children were playing beneath the large horse-chestnut, which already cast a shadow of leaves upon the Kaldenhoff lawn. The edict forbidding noisy games had been revoked, and the merry throng were in hopes that the handsome,

dark-eyed Uhlan officer would soon again ride past the low hedge every day and ask, "Which of you wants to ride with me to the stable?" The footman's duties ceased to be arduous, and Karl, Otto's servant, renewed a highly respectable intimacy with the Countess's maid, which had been interrupted by his master's illness.

In the eyes of the world the old Count was the greatest sufferer by what had occurred. If Otto were taken from him his race must die out. He had long since sold or rented his estates, and had come to live in town for the sake of his three growing boys. There they went to the government school until the university or the king's livery transformed them to men and withdrew them from parental supervision. The two elder sons, who had died one after the other five years previously, had lived fast, like other dashing young men of rank, with no distinguishing traits of character; but Otto had, from a boy, seemed made of different stuff; rich in mental endowments, gifted with force and resolution, he bade fair to justify to the full his parents' pride in him. Why should he, too, thus fall a victim to misfortune? His father called in the best medical advice in the country, and visited the principal insane asylums, shaking his head dubiously when the physicians in charge assured him that there were many cases of acute mania of which the world knew nothing, since, under

favourable conditions, they were sure to be completely cured.

It was of no use. "He is doomed; I shall lose him too." This terrible thought tortured the old man night and day. He avoided his son's sick-room, that he might not be uselessly misled by deceitful hopes; he avoided his wife and her religious admonitions, because he thought himself forsaken of God, and his friends, who now and then induced him to join in a hunting excursion, could do nothing to cheer him. Everybody pitied him, and praised the strength and fortitude of the Countess, always adding, "But her nature is a cold one, and nothing can really affect her." This explanation satisfied a superficial society, so often cruel in its superficiality.

But there were two men who knew how false was this sentence,—knew that this woman was misunderstood,—that she had a heart, and was forced to exercise an almost superhuman amount of fortitude not to succumb beneath the weight of her cross. One of these was Quitzov, and the other was Otto's servant, Karl.

For weeks Quitzov never could draw on his glove without remembering the Countess's sob and feeling her burning lips trembling against his cold palm. "God bless you, my dear,—my dear!" The words often rang through his kindly soul, filled with that strange mingling of inconsiderate boyish vehe-

mence and genuine chivalry that ranked service done to woman in general higher than labours of love for one woman in especial. Those of his comrades who knew him slightly laughed at his 'quixotism;' all who knew him intimately learned to prize highly the pure gold of his character.

From that unhappy evening a strong tie bound him to the service of his friend's mother.

"Should poor Otto die, I will be with her continually, if she will allow me," he vowed to himself, and on his daily visits to the Kaldenhoff villa he never failed to make special inquiries after the Countess's health. Once he encountered Karl in the vestibule, and subjected him to a cross-examination. The honest, ruddy-cheeked servant declared, with genuine distress, "Our Countess cannot last long as she is going on, Herr Lieutenant; she sits up all night, and looks as white as chalk;" and Quitzov, instead of going to the club, went in very melancholy mood to his quarters, where, after a frugal meal, he wrote a letter of unusual length and tenderness to his mother.

While he was writing and thinking of his cheerful home and happy boyhood, the Countess was, as usual, sitting alone by the half-open window of her son's room, the small piece of needlework that had occupied her hands lying in her lap, for the daylight had faded: the moon had risen, and shone into the apartment. It was a very elegant room, richly

furnished, and with light-green hangings and curtains. It had been a drawing-room, but it had been converted into a bedroom for Otto, because it was especially quiet and airy. It was naturally lacking in an air of comfort: the covered chandeliers, the delicate French *bric-à-brac* scattered on the mantel and on countless small tables, the chairs and lounges in their linen covers, were all in melancholy contrast with medicine-bottles and ice-bags. The Countess was utterly deficient in what may be called a woman's sixth sense,—a delicate appreciation of the important trifles of life; that sense which can evoke order from chaos, and kindly light from darkness.

The fading twilight lent the room a doubly ghostly aspect. The night-lamp was not yet lighted. Karl was preparing it in the antechamber, and his heavy, cautious step was the only sound to break the silence, except when now and then the dull noise of wheels was heard from the distant street. The man finally sat down behind the door, which had been left ajar, and applied himself to his "People's Almanac," listening for the slightest call, while the rustle, from time to time, of a turning leaf showed that he was as yet successfully battling with slumber.

The Countess did not stir in her arm-chair. Through the branches of the young elm before the house the full moon shone in brighter and brighter

upon her ; its rays lit up her dark hair where silver threads were beginning to appear and her clasped hands, then stole over to the bed and rested upon the emaciated face of the invalid. There was no refreshing sleep of convalescence there, only profound weariness and melancholy. The well-defined black eyebrows met in delicate points above the bridge of the nose ; and now that neither a laughing mouth nor sparkling eyes could counteract the effect, this lent an expression of profound gloom to the youthful countenance.

He started, muttered in his dream, and his hands wandered to and fro over the coverlet. But when his mother stole to his side and laid her hand upon his, he grew quiet and dozed on.

She remained sitting by the bed, her face turned towards the window, and clasping the dear weak hand firmly, as if to ward off cruel death, who would fain snatch from her this child, her last, her dearest. Would it be best for Otto to live, in bodily health perhaps but with faculties obscured, unable to appreciate his mother's earnest wish to lead him to that serenity and peace for which in the arrogance of youth and strength he had had little care ? Could he ever reconcile himself to exchanging a profession to which he was devoted heart and soul for any other, or for years of idleness ? Meanwhile, he had been granted a six-months' leave of absence. His colonel had repeatedly emphasized



his expectation that his adjutant would resume his military duties in the autumn; but this was a mere supposition, based upon no certain knowledge.

She repeated to herself the verdicts of the various physicians. Each had made a special diagnosis. How futile, how bungling all this human science seemed in comparison with the Almighty fiat, before which human will is but as a frail reed, existing only to be broken, and human wisdom wretched patchwork! The world held no Death-destroyer.

And yet!—Had not she, who now gazed in such despair up at the wandering moon, given this proud name, many years before, to a mortal man in an excess of enthusiastic affection?

“Fritz!” She uttered the name in a whisper, shaded her brow with her other hand, and closed her eyes for a moment, only to open them wide again and gaze fixedly into the soft moonlight among the branches of the elm.

Gradually these branches took on different shapes. They turned to rugged oaken boughs clothed in ivy. The outline of the window contracted, and enclosed octagon panes of greenish glass, among which gleamed in glowing colours, when the moonlight rested upon them, the ancient patrician device and crest of the Edzards and their line. The silken hangings and curtains receded; brown wainscoting covered the walls hung round with portraits framed and unframed. There hung one of a

man in armour from the time of the first Prince of Orange; there were thoughtful brows beneath powdered wigs, and true, honest eyes looked out from fresh Dutch faces surmounting plaited ruffs and crowned by snowy caps. There stood the venerable antique chairs with their flowered chintz, the elaborately carved shelves, and the oaken table with its pillared legs, vying in weight with the rafters of the ceiling. Yes, the full moon was shining thus in the Eichweide 'ancestral room' thirty-six years ago. Outside, its light cast a silver sheen over the adjacent shrubbery and distant meadows, and trembled upon the waters of the moat, among the water-lilies. Within, upon the window-seat, sat a pair of lovers, clasped in each other's arms, and exchanging farewell kisses. The carriage that was to convey the girl home to Liebezahl was waiting in the court-yard, and still her arms were clasped about her lover.

"A whole half-year! Six long weary months!" she wailed, and he remonstrated with her, as well as he could remonstrate while held in the spell of two soft arms and of a fair tearful face. There was no ocean between Eichweide and Berlin. And he cared not a whit for the government examinations so long as his own darling Matty loved him. These were Fritz Edzard's words of consolation, as he gazed enchanted into Mattea Liebezahl's brown eyes.

“Farewell, then, my Fritz, my Death-destroyer!” And with these words she left him, never again to return to his true heart. He was robbed of her love, and the thief called himself his best friend, Maximin Kaldenhoff. Why did this friend come to her day after day, all through the melancholy autumn, when the lonely girl thought herself neglected by her absent lover, because she could not remember that daily love-letters are incompatible with government examinations? She scolded and pouted, he turned off her anger with a jest,—he thought her wiser than she was,—and Maximin Kaldenhoff shrugged his shoulders at his friend Fritz’s incomprehensible conduct, and pitied the girl who was so little appreciated. Why did she come to depend upon the gifts of flowers and the visits of the gallant horseman whom each day brought to her side? Why, after a campaign, did he stay for almost three weeks at Liebezahl, instead of going on the oft-planned journey to England? How did it come about, the transformation of the amiable acquaintance into the chivalric friend? of the chivalric friend into the adorer, whose words were eloquent, and whose philosophy was of the most convenient? She was eighteen years old, and her two sisters had married into families of rank. “A *mésalliance* will in the end kill the most ardent affection,” Maximin repeated to her so often that at last she believed him, and persuaded herself that it would be better for

Fritz and for herself that they should part, so she gave him back his troth. Late in the autumn, on a dreary day in November, she heard that he was at Eichweide for a few hours, and that Maximin would ride over there and tell him all. She never saw him again. In April, when the Easter bonfire was lit on the Elsum hills, and Fritz Edzard had passed his examinations with honours, his betrothed became the betrothed of Maximin Kaldenhoff, and as she slipped the diamond ring, that replaced the simple golden circlet, upon her slender finger, she knew in her inmost soul that her first love had been no mistake. Too late; there was no cancelling what she had done, and she gave the lie to her own honest heart. In June Maximin took her to his home, over scattered flowers, through triumphal arches, past Eichweide, to a distant post in eastern Prussia. Of all that lay between the breaking and the plighting of her troth—hush! oh, hush! not a word of that!

Forgetting where she was, she pressed still more tightly the feverish hand in hers; the sick man moaned, and in a flash the images of by-gone days vanished before present reality.

How came it that she, self-possessed elderly woman that she was, was suddenly aware of an intense longing for the first shy tender joy of her girlhood, and that she whispered the name once so dear to her, as if she could conjure to her aid him

who bore it?—"Fritz, oh, Fritz, help me!" She had last heard twenty years previously of him through a third person. Then he had just been married after long seclusion, and was the head of a celebrated institution for the insane; since that time she had heard nothing of him.

She pushed her arm-chair out of the moonlight, drew the curtains, and took her place in the darkness beside her son's bed. "Why open old graves?" she thought. "The grass has long since grown above them, he is married, and is probably happier than if our youthful dream had been fulfilled. It is better so. I should have been out of place in his sphere. What have I to reproach myself with? I fill my place here, I respect my husband, and he surrounds me with his care; I fulfil my duties to the best of my ability. I have trained our children as well as I could,—our children,—and we have but one left!

"Can there really be an avenging fate, which, stronger than heaven's mercy, turns against our own heart the dagger with which we have wounded others?" During her long night-watches beside her son's bed the Countess had repeated this question to herself countless times, and had searched Holy Writ for an answer. To-night, when the moonlight had aroused in her memories of her lost youth and of her treachery to her love, she recalled the words of the prophet, with which she had long since

tried to comfort herself for her breach of faith with Fritz Edzard: 'Though your sins be red as blood, yet shall they be white as snow.' White as the pale faces of her dead children. "I have made sufficient atonement. Have mercy, O God!" was the prayer of her tortured soul, as she laid her hand upon her son's throbbing heart. He still lived, and while he lived her hope could not die.

Thus she sat motionless, counting the low pulsations beneath her fingers, until her eyes closed, and she went on weaving the golden threads of memory in a half slumber. She awakened upon hearing her name uttered in a whisper by her maid, who came to say that the Herr Count had returned home half an hour previously, and desired to speak with Madame the Countess for a few moments before retiring.

She was instantly wide awake. "To-night, Käthchen? It is past eleven o'clock!" she said, surprised, beckoned to her son's servant to take his place in her son's room, and went to her dressing-room to have her maid arrange the lace cap upon her still abundant hair before she went to her husband.

She found him walking restlessly to and fro in his room. The supper, which he was accustomed to have sent to him after a long hunt, stood untouched upon the table. Contrary to his wont, he was still in his hunting-coat, and looked flushed, as he kissed his wife's hand and placed a chair for her

beside his writing table, upon which lay an open blotting-book and a blank sheet of paper. "I venture to disturb you thus late, Mattea, because I wish to consult you upon an urgent matter," he said. "Pray sit here, my child. Can you give me a few minutes?"

"Certainly, dear, as many as you please," she replied. "Only I do not like to leave Otto until after midnight."

"And therefore I will be as brief as possible," he said, clasping his hands nervously. "The matter concerns Otto, and I do not wish to take any steps about it without your consent. I entreat you to consider without passion the plan which I propose. Could you consent to a lengthened separation from our son as soon as he shall be able to travel?—of course in case a perfectly suitable asylum could be provided for him, where——"

"An asylum?" she interrupted him, with a terrified look. "Does Villers think that we cannot take sufficient care of him here? Oh, Maximin! remember how we were persuaded to let George leave us. I am firmly convinced that that asylum hastened his death."

"You entirely misunderstand me. Please let me finish what I have to say, my dear Mattea," the Count said, taking her hand. "I have no idea of such an asylum for Otto; God forbid! I mean only a peaceful country retreat, with trustworthy

medical treatment. I am not satisfied with that which we have here. Mattea, do not look at me so; it is hard enough for me to tell you what retreat and what physician I have in my mind. The most painful memories are associated with his name. Decide for me. I should like to send Otto to Eichweide, to Fritz Edzard——”

He felt her hand clasp his own nervously; he saw how laboured was her breath. To-night, to-night, when the bitter waters had closed over her soul, how strange was this coincidence of her husband's wishes with her own!

“Fritz Edzard! Oh, Maximin, how did this thought occur to you?” It was all that she could bring herself to say.

“In the most natural way in the world, or rather by an accident,” the Count replied, feeling relieved, now that the dreaded name had been uttered. “Do you not remember Sacken, Ernst Sacken, who eleven years ago owned an estate beyond Rischwitz, and who sold it and moved to Hanover? He came a few days ago with his wife and child to make a visit at Rischwitz, and we lunched there to-day. They put me next Sacken, and I heard from him that Fritz retired long since from his large institution to our dear old Eichweide, and there, until the death of his wife, about nine years ago, he received patients afflicted with melancholy, or with slight mental derangement, but never more than one or



two at a time. He effected some wonderful cures, and inspired the greatest confidence everywhere. Of course I expected to hear no less of Fritz. There was always the making of a distinguished man in him. As a boy he had the keenest eye and the most sympathetic voice, and Sacken himself said to me, 'Depend upon it, Edzard is the very man for your son.' Do you not think that Fritz—if *you* were to write to him?"

"No! my God, no! I have not the slightest claim upon his generosity," she hurriedly interrupted him, and rose, her face aflame. "Not another word, Maximin. It is horrible to ask it of me!"

"Allow me to say one thing before you refuse my request so decidedly," he said, his voice trembling with suppressed agitation. "You, my dear child, certainly have more claim upon his generosity than I. To me he could say no, but not to you, a woman, for he is a gentleman to the heart's core. Mattea, we—you and I—have never to my knowledge had the smallest difference. Shall we begin such now, at this hour, when perhaps our son's health is at stake?"

The colour had faded from her cheeks; pale and trembling she stood before him, fighting to the very utmost of her strength a hard battle with her pride. Suddenly she sat down at the table, crushing within her all thought of self, drew the blank sheet

of paper towards her, and dipped her pen in the ink.

Two or three times she sought in vain for words with which to begin. Dropping the pen, she clasped her hands before her face and rocked to and fro, as if in mortal pain. Could she only have written alone, out of the depths of her anguish,—ah! in spite of all the bitter memories that intervened between herself and the friend of her youth,—she would at this moment have addressed him as ‘dear Fritz,’ and then have implored his forgiveness, have appealed to his magnanimity. But here, beneath the eye of her husband, by whom the letter had always been more valued than the spirit, she neither could nor would write thus; and to anything underhand she never condescended.

At last she collected herself, began her letter formally, and then slowly, and with many pauses for reflection, continued writing line after line until the delicate characters ‘Mattea Kaldenhoff’ were inscribed at the end of the sheet. “It was your wish; God grant it may bring a blessing for Otto!” she said, in a strange, forced voice, handing the finished letter to her husband. He ran through it twice, nodding approvingly as he read. When he had done, he pressed his wife’s hand and gave her a grateful look. But she gently repulsed him and shook her head. “Do not speak to me now. Good-night, my dear, good-night!”

With this she glided out of the room. He hurried after her, kissed her forehead, and would not be deterred from escorting her up the staircase to Otto's apartment. "Be sure that it was the right thing for you to write, and not for me," he said, as he stood for a moment with her beside their son's bed. "Your letter is perfect, admirable in every line. I will vouch for the result. And now pray do not over-fatigue yourself; take care of your own health, my dear Mattea, and good-night."

He left her; she sat down in her old place beside her son's bed, laid her head down on the pillow beside his, and the tears flowed freely. She had drained her cup of wormwood to the very dregs.

The servant, who stood aside respectfully, did not exist for her. He slipped out on tiptoe, returning with the lighted night-lamp, which he placed upon a small table, and then approached the bed with a confused glance at the tearful eyes of the Countess, who lifted her head as he addressed her, "It is my time now, madame; I slept from nine until eleven."

"Go on sleeping, Karl; I am going to stay here," she said; but the man did not yield.

"It cannot be, madame; the Herr Lieutenant never would allow it, and I must obey orders. What would become of my master if he should recover only to find Madame the Countess ill, and he away on service half the day?"

She shook her head sadly. "Service! my good Karl. There can be no idea of that for many a long day. They talk of sending your master away as soon as he is able to travel."

"Eh, madame? Why, that's the very thing for the Herr Lieutenant. No good can come of his staying here forever; 'tis like being in arrest for one of us. I am to go with him?"

"I cannot tell, Karl. . You could hardly be nurse and servant too——"

"And why not, madame? I can do what any other man can do of a servant's duty." And Karl stood erect after true military fashion. "Depend upon it, madame, no one else can serve my master as I can. Saints above! it is striking one. I must be at my post, madame."

She looked up at the kindly fellow with weary eyes, leaned over the sleeper, and listened once more to his breathing before she betook herself to rest for a few hours. When she had gone, Karl began his watch, sitting bolt upright and staring fixedly into vacancy until his master called to him and asked, fretfully, why it was so frightfully dark. "Because it is just a quarter of two, Herr Lieutenant," the man replied, turning the bright side of the night-lamp towards the bed, "and the sun does not rise until five. But by the time that we, the Herr Lieutenant and I, depart upon our journey it will rise at four."

"Journey? Where to?" the invalid murmured, without raising his heavy eyelids, and then he sank back into an uneasy slumber, while Karl continued his faithful watch.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CRUEL KINDNESS.

SPRING had turned to summer, the roses were in full bloom, and the gardener was busy from morning till night in the Kaldenhoff garden. It was mowed and rolled and watered and gravelled; the smallest withered leaf on the English lawn, the least untrained straying of a vine over the trim beds, was forbidden. Rare conifers rose like dark pyramids from the velvet green, the gilded ball of the little fountain danced in the sunshine, and every one dreaded the first dusty day, which would obscure all this beauty beneath an unseemly veil.

For the first time since Otto had been ill, Quitzov had dined with him and his parents, and he was now sitting with them at coffee in the little veranda. It was rather sunny there, and the tubs of pelargoniums and yellow calceolarias formed but a slight screen from the curious eyes of passers-by. But the air was fresh and sweet, and Otto silently hoped that the gardener would soon carry his grating rake to the greenhouse and retire for his afternoon mug of beer. He was not perfectly clear as to which he most detested, the gardener

or the veranda. The heart of the Countess appeared to be bound up in both, inasmuch as she daily extolled the excellence of the former, and the priceless worth of the latter as a retreat for a convalescent. For Otto's convenience she had her own *chaise longue* rolled out here, and had crocheted an afghan for it, the palms upon which the sufferer felt compelled against his will to count every time they struck his eye. Weary of objecting, he submitted to all these arrangements for his comfort, and only stipulated for a folding screen in front of his chair, that he might be more secluded from the outside world. To-day he was reclining here passively; coffee and cigars were on a table beside him; he had not touched either, and he replied to his mother's attempts to draw him into the conversation only by an impatient frown.

He felt an intense desire for repose and solitude, and those about him were occupied from morning until night with efforts to distract his mind. From what? 'Can a man be distracted from what, after some great crisis in his life, shapes his individuality anew?' This sentence he perpetually turned over in his thoughts, trying in vain to deduce some conclusion from it. He could not get the better of a dull persistence of mind and a certain misty indistinctness of sensation. Quitzov's well-meant chatter during this sultry afternoon hour struck upon his ear but did not penetrate his brain, although it

wearied it, as water dropping at regular intervals near one who is tired will annoy and prevent sleep.

The Countess, with the most affectionate intentions, acted cruelly towards her son, and made his condition worse instead of improving it. She never for an instant lost sight of him, or failed to listen to everything that he said, in hopes of gaining some clue, perhaps from a chance word, as to how to lure him back to an interest in life. How much harm is done in this way to the mentally and morally diseased of all stations! For weeks she had been taking the utmost pains to induce Otto to 'submit to the will of God,' trying to make him contemplate everything that had occurred from an exalted point of view, and to represent to him the wretched cause of his illness as an instrument of heaven sent to perfect him through suffering. She preached to deaf ears: Otto would not even listen to her.

She had been greatly attracted by Quitzov's honesty and simplicity; and his sympathy, which was always on the alert without ever being officious, soothed her heart when her son seemed to turn from her. Yes, there were times when she wished that Otto resembled this amiable, simple-hearted comrade of his; and then when she took up and read Otto's manuscript upon some historical points of interest, in writing which he had beguiled his leisure hours a few months since, her maternal pride recalled the wish. He had never yet referred to this



work of his, and Dr. Villers did not wish him to be reminded of it. Otto thought the staff physician insufferable; his father preferred him to all his colleagues because he held his tongue and treated his aristocratic patients like demigods. This was quite to the taste of the old Count, who was often ailing, and who set great store by a conventional refinement of manner. Therefore Villers was to be retained as Otto's physician until the patient could undertake the contemplated journey. No reply had yet been received from Dr. Edzard, and this state of uncertainty was highly distressing to both the Count and the Countess.

The letter-carrier had just left only the newspaper, and the sense of disappointment that overcomes those who have been hoping for what each post has failed to bring depressed the Countess. In spite of her self-control, she once or twice lost the thread of conversation with her guest, and he, suspecting that she was fatigued, arose to take leave.

"Then at six punctually I shall be back with the dog-cart and pick you up, Otto," he said, with a good-natured smile, although he could not quite overcome a nervous distrust of his friend's condition. "That's agreed, eh?"

He stood, cap in hand, by Otto's table, and as his friend lay apathetically quiet with his hand over his eyes, Quitzov gently pulled it away. "Come, old fellow, look up at me frankly as you used to do.

There's nothing the matter with you now. Everything will go right if you will only hold up your head. There's no good to be got out of prosing and dozing away your life. We must get you about again, cheer you up,—always with your permission, madame."

"I am sincerely grateful to you for all your kindness to Otto, my dear Herr von Quitzov," the Countess replied, waving her huge black satin fan slowly to and fro. "Heaven grant that in time Otto may truly appreciate and repay the attentions of his friends!"

"Oh, of course, certainly, madame, we all know that. Please do not mention it. What we do we do with the greatest pleasure." And poor Quitzov, confused and touched, stared fixedly at his boots. "It is no end of a pity that Buchberg is away on leave, and that Plessin has been ordered off, to Metz, to the military school. Did you know it, Kaldenhoff? Now decide,—shall it be six o'clock? The day is perfect, warm, and no dust, and I'll wager you'll approve of my new bays. They go like the wind, I can tell you; full-blooded——"

"Oh, of course I shall approve," Otto interrupted him, turning aside his face to avoid his mother's anxious look. "Would you have the kindness, mother, to lend me your fan? The air is rather oppressive here——"

"And therefore you must make up your mind to

a drive," said Quitzov; and the Countess added, "You should be more grateful to God, my child, for being able once more to enjoy fine weather."

Otto took the fan, the motion of which he had found most irritating, folded it, and kept it in his hand. "Leave me where I am, Heinz, and drive where you will without me. It all bores me. I should like——"

"Come, come, that's sheer nonsense, Otto," Quitzov interrupted, patting him on the shoulder paternally. "Dear old boy, you know I am at your service always. Come, be reasonable. You have the same old eyes in your head and can see the sunshine; and you must remember that in such weather, with a good horse under you, or before you, and a good comrade beside you, you were the merriest of us all. Then, too, Villers says——"

"Don't speak to me of that poisoner and his silly babble!" Otto said angrily. "Since when has Villers's opinion been worth quoting? Since he made such a success of me, perhaps? Charlatan!" He leaned back among his cushions and shut his eyes.

Quitzov shrugged his shoulders, and buckled on his sabre to go. For a moment he stood irresolute in the door-way; the Countess looked sadly at him, then went to her son, and, taking his face between her hands, forced him to look at her. "My dearest son, do not be so wayward, so childish!" she entreated. "Why will you not take a pleasant

drive when Herr von Quitzov is kind enough to come for you?"

Otto pushed away his mother's hands. "You torment me beyond bearing, mother; and what do you gain by it?" he exclaimed, and his eyes began to flash. "I am quite conscious that I have no right to wear my uniform; and drive through the town in a civilian's dress, an idler, dependent upon the king's bounty, I will not."

"But, my dear Otto, then take your cloak and put on your cap. Nothing can be more simple, since you look at things in that way," cried Quitzov impatiently. "I'll tell you what, we'll drive round to the parade-ground; it will amuse you to see those clumsy fellows drilling, with Tettau, the future field-marshal, ordering them about. That boy is too delightful."

"I should be ashamed to look on at such a farce. What do you take me for?" Otto said crossly. "What have I to do with those men, or upon the parade-ground? I have nothing more to do with the service,—my life is over. At least leave me in peace. Am I to let you drive me about like a child who cannot be trusted with the reins? Am I to let myself be pointed at as the last of an old race that has gone to pieces? You are good-hearted fellows, Quitzov, and I thank you all,"—although his words were harsh his look was one of profound melancholy,—“but I should like never to have to see one

of you again. A desert island for me, or the Lüneberg heath, if you choose, only not this detestable town! Adieu, Quitzov. Don't take what I say amiss; do you hear? And, mother, I want to be alone. I will do what you please, only let me be alone!"

The anguish of a wounded soul was in this entreaty, which, as usual, was disregarded. Acting upon the despairing words, "I will do what you please," the drive was, as the Countess desired, resolved upon, and Quitzov hurried away to be in time with the dog-cart.

After his friend had gone, Otto arose silently, coldly endured his mother's tender kiss, went into his room, and rang for Karl.

The man appeared, and shook his head behind Otto's back when he learned what was going on. He could have told how his master continually broke down at the end of the day, how he would murmur fragmentary phrases to himself, and how he would toss, sleepless, in his bed for hours. But respect forbade him to speak.

"I wish we could go travelling alone. I would take the best of care of the Herr Lieutenant," he said, bringing a civilian overcoat from the wardrobe and helping his master into it, for it wanted but a few minutes of six.

"Yes, yes, my good Karl, if we only could. If they would let us go, and if we only knew whither."

"Oh, we could find a pleasant place somewhere,—back of Podangen, where the forest is so fine, or out by the lake, where one could take the nursing into his own hands,—that is the main point. I wish some one would speak to the Herr Count about it," he went on, brushing Otto's coat. "The Herr Lieutenant is not sitting behind bolts and bars here, but has his liberty like all other Christians."

"A glorious liberty!" Otto said, by way of rejoinder to Karl's remarks. "Stop that brushing, Karl; it is no matter at all how I look. And to sit behind bolts and bars, as you say, is not the worst thing by long odds that could happen to one. Better to sit behind bolts and bars and be alone than to have to sleep here in this grass-green room, and see people and go to drive—pshaw!—because the sun shines. What is the sunshine to me?"

"Well, it is certainly finer than the steady rain we had last week, Herr Lieutenant," Karl observed. "If that had continued, the hay and potatoes might have been spoiled as they were last year. And as for bolts and bars, I would not wish for them, Herr Lieutenant. I heard from a man who had been there that sometimes they had to wear a tight band about the body, and that keepers and blows were necessary. The Herr Lieutenant would not like that much."

"Hush, hush! would you drive me mad?" Otto cried, rising and breathing in quick gasps, his eyes

riveted upon vacancy. Suddenly he hid his face in his hands, and began to sob as if in agony.

Poor Karl was beside himself with grief at the consequences of his stupidity. He would have liked to throw himself at his master's feet to ask his pardon, and then to pull away his hands from his eyes, to get his bed ready for him, to keep the room dark and quiet, while he stood sentinel at the door that no one might disturb the calm of his solitude. But he was but a servant, a common soldier, whose part it was to obey.

The sound of the dog-cart stopping before the gate-way was heard below; Quitzov came running up the marble steps, and had much to say to the old Count on the landing of the beauty of the afternoon.

"Will the Herr Lieutenant have the blue umbrella?" Karl ventured to ask at last, and the words were uttered so meekly and timidly that Otto's hands dropped from his face, and his dimmed eyes looked kindly into those of his faithful servitor. "Thank you; let the umbrella stay where it is until we go away together," he replied. "Do not take the matter so to heart, Karl; you understand me better, at all events, than the rest of them. Do not you leave me," he added. Then he pulled his hat low over his eyes, and went languidly along the corridor to meet Quitzov.

"I'll promise you that, Herr Lieutenant," the faithful fellow said solemnly, as he followed his master, and as he uttered the words he raised his right hand as if taking an oath.



## CHAPTER V.

### EICHWEIDE.

THE next day arrived the long-expected tidings from Dr. Edzard. He had returned to his home only on the previous day from an absence necessitated by important family affairs, and the Countess's letter had missed him. This was his excuse for the delay in his reply, which was addressed to the Count and was brief and grave. In spite, however, of its brevity and gravity, there was no mistaking the writer's perfect readiness to do all that he could in the way of medical and paternal care for the son of his former friend.

"First of all, I must entreat your son to consider himself my guest," he wrote. "I cannot consent to any other arrangement. As matters stand between us, this will be by far the best and easiest plan. It is years since I have had anything to do with any institution. I am really nothing now but a simple country doctor, and I have become somewhat of a farmer. But my interest in mental disturbance is still keen, and in spite of my retirement I have some confidence in my power to effect somewhat in this my specialty. You know Eichweide,—

except for the changes wrought by death it is the same old Eichweide that you remember, and you know that its doors were never closed to guests. It stands ready to receive your son, and I trust I shall be able to be of use to him."

The Countess's heart failed her as she read this letter. Her name was not even mentioned, nor was she alluded to except in the conventional 'remembrances to your family' at the close. He to whom she was about to place herself under such obligations was still implacable. At times her pride would revolt at this humiliating conviction; but her love for her son conquered all other considerations, and she began to make the necessary preparations for his departure. The Count answered Dr. Edzard's letter with many expressions of gratitude, and hastened to inform Otto of the proposed journey, and to tell him that he himself would accompany him, for the purpose of visiting once more his boyhood's home after so many years. After a deal of discussion between the father and son the Countess interfered, and it was decided that Karl should accompany his master. To this end he was provided with a suit of the Count's livery and with a good watch, while he was admonished to devote himself to the study of the route the party was to take.

Otto would have seemed entirely himself but for a certain negligence of carriage, an intense melancholy in his eyes, and a peculiar pallor. He

urged on the preparations for his departure with feverish eagerness, and there were hours in which he almost forgot his 'newly-shaped individuality.' To be sure, Karl alone had the satisfaction of seeing him at these times, old friends and acquaintances were misanthropically avoided, and with his parents he maintained a gloomy demeanour, from which his mother suffered inexpressibly. She thought she could read a mute reproach in his every look, and it pained her bitterly that Otto should, in apparent disregard of her feelings, show such an eager desire to leave his home, while she felt more profoundly from day to day that he was all she had in the world.

Thus, towards the end of June, the separation took place. Otto refused obstinately to bid his comrades farewell, but they nevertheless appeared in force at the railway-station, whence they returned to their quarters with but a dreary impression of their comrade, who had settled himself in a corner of the railway-carriage with scarcely a word for any of them. The Countess bore the parting with great fortitude. Her pious faith in the mercy of heaven, and her confidence in the science and ability of Dr. Edzard, sustained her. She still saw in Fritz Edzard the 'Death-destroyer.'

The long journey from eastern Prussia to the country of the North Sea marches was very trying

for each member of the party. The jolting of carriages, the crowded hotels, the moments spent in noisy waiting-rooms, gave continuous pain to Otto. The Count was forced to learn that rank and wealth, the potentates of our age, are sometimes powerless to satisfy earthly desires or to smooth life's pathway. He thought more than seven hours of travel daily too much for his son, who suffered from sleeplessness, and Karl was obliged to keep his five senses upon the alert to satisfy the requirements of both his masters.

At length, on the third day, the desired goal was but a few leagues distant. The last resting-place was left behind; a despatch had been sent to the Countess, and the train was speeding northward. The chain of the Harz Mountains faded in the distance as swiftly as it had appeared; endless stretches of moorland and heather bounded the horizon; here wound a silver stream, there the blue smoke curled above the thatched roof of an isolated farmhouse. Rows of beehives stood in the sunlight in the midst of flowery meadows, and mild-eyed cows grazed in fields enclosed by luxuriant hedges.

Otto looked neither to the right nor to the left. His limbs ached, his head was heavy. He leaned back upon the faded cushions, and listened idly to the monotonous whirr and bump of the car-wheels until he fell asleep. He waked with a start only when the guard called 'Elsam Station.' The door

opened, and Karl appeared to lend his aid to the two gentlemen in alighting.

The old Count did not heed his offered arm, but sprang down from the carriage-door, forgetting his years. The hectic spot on his cheek, always with him betokening mental agitation, appeared distinctly now. He took off his hat, and passed his hand once or twice across his forehead, from which the hair had retreated. Then, as Otto stood beside him, he suddenly collected himself, and called to the station-master to know if there were any conveyance in waiting from Dr. Edzard's.

The obliging official ran around the corner of the picturesque railway-station, and waved both arms in the direction of a white bridge, at the end of which stood the old custom-house.

"It will be here instantly, sir, instantly," the stout little man declared, with a bow. "Herr Doctor Edzard expects guests from eastern Prussia, Christian Siemers told me so; and shall I not have the honour, Herr Count,—it is something of a drive, and it is warm at this season of the year,—shall I not have the honour of serving you with a glass of beer? Fresh from the cask,—my wife keeps it in the waiting-room."

The Count declined it with a wave of his hand, and looked impatiently towards the carriage, which was approaching deliberately.

"You are doubtless accustomed to quicker driv-

ing, Herr Count," the talkative station-master continued; "it is almost here now, and we have the small packages all together; two, four, five,—all right. The Herr Doctor will send for the trunks after the seven o'clock train. He is rather particular about his horses, and Christian Siemers does not dare to drive them too near to the station,—as far as the little custom-house, and not a step farther upon any account."

"Christian Siemers,—Christian Siemers,—where can I have heard that name?" the Count said to himself, shaking his head over his loss of memory, as he advanced to meet the carriage.

The coachman, a thick-set, middle-aged fellow, brought his horses up with a fine turn and nodded good-humouredly. "Woa! Good-evening, Herr.—Evening, Reithmüller; is the beer fresh?"

"Are you Dr. Edzard's coachman?" the Count asked stiffly, half closing his eyes, for he disliked cordial greetings from his inferiors.

"I am that, Herr," Christian Siemers replied, nothing daunted; on the contrary, he winked significantly at his friend Reithmüller, the station-master, and as the result of this wink had a glass of small-beer handed up to him upon the box, which he made ready to pay for with some copper coins.

"Not at all,—this is my affair. You drink a glass

too, Karl," said the Count, taking out his purse. "And how is your master? Is he well?"

"Pretty lively, thank you kindly," replied Christian Siemers, wiping his lips with the back of his gloved hand. "These cursed things take all the feeling out of my fingers!" he remarked, as, with the help of his teeth, he freed his broad palm from the white cotton abominations. "The Herr Doctor sent his respects, and we are to take the drive easily on account of the fresh, damp road. I should not have known you without being told, Herr Count."

"Do you remember me, then?" asked the Count. "I cannot recall you at all."

"That would be expecting too much; but how could I forget the Herr Count? When you were in the Lübberswerder hussars I tended pigs for the late Baron Liebezahl, and at our Fräulein's marriage I fired the little cannon behind the pigsties. Does not the Herr Count remember? My present master, our Dr. Edzard, was away then at the examinations in Berlin, or I should have had to give up playing with powder! And then the Herr Count went to——"

"I know!" the Count interrupted him, and his lips twitched slightly, as he gave orders: "Put the hand-luggage on the back seat, porter. Get up on the box with the coachman, Karl. Take my arm, Otto, and get in. Are you comfortable,

my boy?" he asked anxiously, as the young man sat beside him, a silken air-cushion behind him, his wrap over his knees. Otto absently nodded an assent.

At the custom-house they stopped for a few minutes. Gärdes, the search-officer, looked through the carriage, and roughly told it to drive on. The Count got out of it, and bade Christian Siemers go on without him. "I know every step of the way, and should like to walk a little," he said. "I shall overtake you at Neuenweg."

The carriage rolled across the bridge, and the Count was left standing alone. Christian Siemers turned round on the box and shouted something to him through his hollowed hand, but his words died away unheard.

The old man leaned against the white balustrade of the bridge as if spell-bound; he did not see the gray-headed official watching him eagerly from his little room until he had made sure of his identity, when he closed the window angrily.

Long ago Gärdes had shouted loud curses after that man for the sake of their common playfellow, Fritz Edzard, and had hurled a handful of pebbles after the gay wedding-coach, when he had fairly turned it inside out, as if those sitting within it were the most arrant smugglers instead of a gay bride and bridegroom. On that day he had bribed his superior to allow him for this once only to take his place



as search-officer. They might each have lost his office and his means of support, but the thing had succeeded, and was worth the risk. "You d—d traitor! what do you want here?" the old fellow muttered to himself, clenching his fist. "I knew your boy in an instant by his Liebezahl face. There's not one of that race, thank God! left in the country here, and they'd better stay away. Neither of you look any too content with your life, —the devil fly away with you both!" And he went out of the room into his damp little garden, that he might no longer be forced to look at the man he hated.

The Count was still standing gazing down the clear, broad stream of the Elsum and beyond to the chain of wooded hills, with their scattered white villas, that bounded the rich meadow-land on the west. At its base lay the village of Elsum, embedded in greenery, its red-tiled roofs and solid church-tower looking as homelike and friendly as of yore. A well-built dike kept the capricious Elsum within bounds; it was only too fond, when the east wind curled its blue waters, of playing roughly with the village skiffs and sail-boats.

Beyond the dam there was a row of ancient pollard willows, beside which ran the path, bordered with blackberry-vines and yellow broom, leading to the Moorland Inn, a tavern in bad repute hereabouts, —the resort of travelling tinkers, gypsies, and idle

vagabonds. To-day, as of yore, this inn was the one blemish in the idyllic scene. Around the moor and the corn-fields wound the broad, level road to Eichweide, with so many bends and turns that the traveller thither on foot might lounge away a half-hour and still be sure of overtaking the carriage, for the foot-path, after following the course of the river for a short distance, struck directly across through the woods. Thus at least the Count remembered it. He had been obliged to stoop beneath the low beechen boughs a hundred times when riding through these woods. He sought and found the path along the Elsum, everywhere discovering traces of the dear old time, until his way was barred unexpectedly by the structure of the dike and the small house of the watchman.

"A barrier for my thoughts," he said to himself, pausing and striking the grassy wall with his cane. "Everything is different here, as throughout the country; better built, more cultivated, but not better or happier. *He*, perhaps, may be happier now than formerly; *I* can tell of the contrary fate. But all penance, all endurance, has its bounds, and I have reached them."

Again he struck the ground with his cane, and, turning, walked slowly back across the meadows, past some peasants at work. It positively touched him that he understood their patois as well as ever, when he asked his way of one of them, who soon

pointed out to him the mossy path through the woods.

The bit of woodland had become a beautiful forest, filled with gleams of sunlight and the sound of many-voiced birds. From the distance were heard the tap of the woodpecker and the cry of the cuckoo. The sun glowed in the skies a distinct ball of fire, for the air was redolent of thick, yellow fog,—a mist the odour of which produces a drowsy languor of the senses, and which every one declares detestable, although one whiff of it will produce homesickness in the children of the moors in whatever foreign country they may be.

The Count pursued his way without further let or hindrance. He was now upon familiar ground, the estate of Eichweide. He gazed up into the tall tops of the beeches, not to admire their luxuriance, but to ruminate upon the melancholy fact that everything grows old and passes away. The withered leaves of the past year rustled beneath his tread in the unfrequented pathway; he brushed heedlessly past tufts of giant bracken, and the deer, disturbed, breaking through the thicket, startled him. He had never been very susceptible to the charms of nature, and had ceased altogether to be so when the 'suffering creature' had gained predominance in him over the 'human being.' Here was the stone bench where he had sat so often in the quiet evening twilight with Mattea, in that autumn

when she had still been the shy betrothed of Fritz Edzard, and for him only the 'little friend,' who would put her basket of flowers down upon the seat between them and clasp her small hands in her lap while she talked of Fritz. This seat was the mute witness of her first doubt of Fritz, of Maximin's first kiss. It stood there now, battered and moss-grown, in the damp shade; toadstools were growing at its base, and a wild honeysuckle in full bloom wreathed it all about. To the left, where the young firs were thickest, there was formerly a winding, narrow pathway leading to the Liebezahl estate.

The forest soon began to recede, and, flooded with the red gold of the late June afternoon, a lovely homelike scene lay before the man who was struggling to put to flight the thronging memories of his youth, lest they should overcome him and make it impossible for him to meet the companion of past days.

As far as the eye could reach, stretched meadows of the richest green, intersected by silver streamlets. The earth and sky kissed each other, except where the line of hills bounded the western horizon, like dark bands of hair above a serene, happy face. How fair and benignant it all was! how contentedly the storks marched among the reeds, the swift swallows darted through the air, the larks sang, and the bees buzzed over the beds of thyme!

Behind the woods lay Liebezahl, no longer the solid, respectable mansion of by-gone days. The foundations alone were the same. A wealthy parvenu had built him there in the shade of silver poplars and copper beeches a splendid chateau with yellow bas-reliefs upon red brick.

But there lay dear Eichweide, as unchanged as if the years that had passed over it had been but so many days. The windows of the moss-grown edifice glittered behind the foliage of the ash-trees, and the crowns of the ancient oaks that sheltered the farther side of the house appeared above its gabled roof. The weathercock on the flag-staff in the centre of the half-mowed lawn shone like a flame of fire in the sunlight. Below it, the old-fashioned garden was beginning to show twilight shadows.

The Count's still excellent eyes could discern the two light bridges leading across the broad moat—the 'grafft,' as it is called hereabouts—to the shrubbery, the island, and the 'flower-dike.' The 'flower-dike,' that narrow pathway trodden by so many a pair of lovers, still existed then, encircling the kitchen-garden, on the other side of the grafft, with its luxuriant hedge of privet, its wild rose-bushes, and its tall, rustling grasses! And the huge bed of stiff red lilies beside the ninepin-alley, and the portico to the stable, with the storks' nest on the peaked gable! The thatched roof of the stable was white with doves; they fluttered upward, a snowy cloud,

and hovered above the house,—messengers of peace!

The Count passed his hand over his eyes, and leaned heavily upon his cane. The walk had been too long, and too trying. He took out his handkerchief and wiped the moisture from his brow, then turned and walked back a few paces to where the road and the footpath to Eichweide met in what was called the Neuenweg.

Here upon the most primitive of benches, a board nailed upon the stumps of four fir-trees, he sat down and awaited the arrival of the carriage.

Scarcely two minutes had passed when it made its appearance, and he took his seat beside his son, asking anxiously how he was, for Otto looked fatigued and languid. Nevertheless the shadow of a smile flitted across his face as he said, "How quiet it is here; no dust anywhere, and the delicious green rests one's eyes!"

His father could have fallen upon his neck and thanked him for these words, but he was really unable to speak. He sat leaning forward, his hand upon the window-frame of the carriage, gazing eagerly towards the windows glittering among the ash-boughs. During those few minutes he lived over his whole lifetime.

The carriage rolled swiftly along beneath the shade of mountain-ashes, passed a ruined brick-kiln, and then along a garden hedge. From the flower-

beds behind it was wafted a delicious odour of mingled mignonette, wall-flowers, and June roses. Suddenly the vehicle, turning a sharp corner, drove into a court-yard. Dogs barked, and standing in the oaken door-way, with a ready welcome, appeared the master of the house.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AFTER LONG YEARS.

AFTER thirty-five years the old friends sat together once more in the doctor's study, the most modest apartment in the house.

Just as on that evening when, on this very spot, they had taken a brief angry leave of each other, the dying day looked in at the window through the vines and ivy-leaves that clustered about and over it. Thirty-five years ago the November wind had whistled loudly through the branches of the venerable oaks, and had startled the crows from their shelter among them, and the first powdery snow had covered the last pale rosebuds in the bed before the veranda, withering them on their stems. Now, the lovely June day smiled its sweetest smile before going to rest. The 'Bühlo bird,' as the oriole is called in this part of the country, incessantly uttered his short note in a cherry-tree near by; the tender coo of a wild dove came from far up among the oak-boughs, and the air was laden with the aroma of new-mown hay.

Count Kaldenhoff had taken from his note-book a photograph of his wife and handed it to the phy-



sician, who gazed long and earnestly at this image of the lost love of his youth. The picture, to be sure, had been taken seven years previously, but seven was only a fifth of thirty-five, and the Count declared that the Countess had not changed in the least since it was taken. Since then? How could it be possible? "He loves her, and love makes him blind," thought Dr. Edzard, as he said to himself that, judging from this picture, the former Baroness Liebezah! had remained wonderfully like herself. The features were still exquisitely beautiful, the dimples still visible in the smoothly rounded cheek. Nevertheless there was an air of coldness in the whole attitude that made a strange and sad impression on the physician. "She cannot look so now," he thought; "she has lost three children since this was taken."

"Should you have known her, Fritz?" asked the Count, and Dr. Edzard's reply, "Among a thousand, Max!" was honestly and frankly spoken. But whether he should again, as of yore, have chosen her alone among a thousand, whether again, as of yore, he should all but have gone to ruin when he lost her,—finding his salvation in constant laborious occupation alone,—over that question he must have silently shaken his head, as he laid the lovely picture aside.

That first young dream of love had faded long since, though it was still unforgotten, for the Psyche

within us mortals takes care that no flutter of her wings shall be in vain.

Therefore the first half-hour of reunion had not quite sufficed to bridge over the gulf which had been made long years before between the friends and school-fellows, and which no attempt at intercourse since had helped to fill up. Both avoided touching the old wound; but Edzard, at this moment, forgave his faithless betrothed for calling her love for him a mistake, and with gratitude in his soul he thought of his dead wife, who had given him in his ripe manhood the priceless treasure of a faithful heart and serene content. Blessings upon her memory!

"Heaven has tried us terribly," said the Count, covering his worn face with his hand. "We had two promising sons and a dear daughter besides Otto, and all three are dead,—dead, as I am almost convinced, of the same insidious disease in various stages of development. I think that even Matty, the very apple of my eye, Fritz, was spared a great deal by her early death. Tell me how such a thing is possible. You are a physician and have some insight into the mysteries of human nature, tell me, where did the curse begin and where will it end? There never was a case of insanity either in Mattea's family or mine, and here is this demon sweeping my ancient name from off the earth. Have patience with me and let me unburden my soul to

*f*

you, Fritz. I wrote you the other day about George and Wilhelm, but I was so shocked, so overcome by this illness of Otto's, that I am afraid I was incoherent. George's suffering may have been caused by the life he led,—I say *may* have been; but many a young fellow leads the same wild life and does not end as did my poor boy. As for Wilhelm, he was at six-and-twenty the very embodiment of health and strength. Suddenly, in St. Petersburg (he was attaché to our embassy there), he was attacked by violent neuralgia, and he took it into his head that it was the forerunner of the malady of which his brother had died. They say he wasted away to a shadow, but he never allowed us to hear anything about it. One day he shot himself, at a court festivity at Tsarkoe Selo, leaving us not a word by way of farewell. He wrote to the poor girl to whom he was betrothed, Ida Woronesch, that the thought of George's terrible death haunted him perpetually, and that he was possessed by a presentiment that he should follow in his brother's steps. He preferred to save both herself and himself from such a fate,—she must not call him a coward. Can you wonder that after this Otto entertained the gloomiest forebodings? He has always been Mattea's favorite, her pride and delight. You should have seen him, Fritz, in his Uhlan uniform. For more than a year he has been pondering upon the terrible idea that he was doomed, and, in spite

of his constant occupation (he devoted all the time not given to his profession to historical research, in which he was intensely interested), it told upon him. Then came the shock of that girl's treachery, and he succumbed. I was utterly at a loss what to do, utterly! The first ray of hope visited me when I heard from Ernst Sacken that you were living here on the dear old spot. And I remembered your true heart, and thought that you would not refuse to aid even your enemy in his bitter need. I was right. I thank you, Fritz, from my soul. God reward you for all you undertake for us."

"No need of thanks, Max," the physician replied. "I still practise in Elsum and the country hereabouts. Trust me to do with all my heart whatever I can for your son."

"And all is right between us again, as it was before that time?" the Count asked. "I pray you, Fritz, to let me give you Mattea's picture; accept it for my sake." And he leaned forward to see his friend's face more clearly in the growing darkness.

"All is as it used to be, my dear Max, and I am happy to know that it is so," said Edzard, taking the photograph from the Count's hand. "Yes," he continued, "to show you how long ago and how entirely all the bitter feeling of my youth vanished, I will send your wife, by you, with my kindest greetings, a picture of another Matty."

He rose as he spoke, lighted a lamp, and searched

for a while in his old writing-desk (how often Maximin Kaldenhoff had written his holiday thesis upon it!) until he found a photograph of a charming child with fair curls, which he handed to the Count, remarking as he did so, "It is not a very recent likeness; it was taken four or five years ago, but it is still very good."

The Count put on his spectacles and looked long at the little card. "Your daughter, Fritz, is it not? You had but this one child, I think. What a sweet and lovely face! and ridiculously like you when you were in the third form and I in the fourth. Even your famous dimple in the chin is repeated. And you called her Mattea? Mattea is really her name?" He suddenly threw his arm around Edzard's shoulder. "My dear old friend, I thank you—Mattea and I thank you more for this than for anything else. To have a Matty about the house here will make Otto feel at home at once. He will think of his sister whom he loved so tenderly, and will forget his grief. Good heavens, where is he now? Do not leave him alone, Fritz. You know he has been closely watched. Would it not be better to see after him now?"

"No, no, Max. We'll have no more of your close watching, and all the rest of it. You have consigned him to me, and I reign here absolutely. He has gone to his room, and shall have his first cup of tea alone there. His servant Karl is within call,

and he has had and has understood his orders from me. I like that man: he is quiet and is attentive when he is addressed. If Otto is sufficiently rested he will eat supper with us in an hour; we are late to-night on account of the harvest; I will have some refreshment brought up here for you."

But the Count refused to take anything. "I am too anxious, altogether too anxious."

"At least you must have a glass of wine and a biscuit." And Edzard rang the bell. "In the mean-while give me Dr. Villers's diagnosis, and let me look through it."

He sat down at his desk to read. From time to time the fine blue eyes beneath the broad brow, with its thick gray hair, stole a glance of mingled scrutiny and compassion at his guest.

The Count, after hurriedly drinking a glass of wine, paced the room to and fro in nervous restlessness. He took a book from the shelves and turned over the leaves without knowing anything of its contents; he opened a case of instruments and shut it again without an idea of what was inside. Two or three times he paused in his walk through the study and the adjoining library to look over his friend's shoulder at the closely-written sheet and ask some question or make some remark.

"He has grown very old in these thirty-five years," thought Edzard. Although hardly sixty, the Count looked over seventy. His features had

indeed preserved their refined, aristocratic outline, but there always had been something of weakness in the slightly receding brow and rounded chin; his hair and moustache were thin and snow-white, and his tall, slender figure was decidedly bent.

"Well, what is your verdict, Friedrich?" he asked, as Edzard folded the sheet of paper and put it in his letter-book. "Do not spare me; for heaven's sake do not try to deceive me. I see perfectly clearly; it is a desperate case. Why God punishes me thus He alone knows. I am a wretched, miserable father!"

"My dear Kaldenhoff, you see nothing clearly, for I do not consider the case in the least desperate," the physician replied, laying his hand soothingly upon the Count's arm. "Do not keep looking at the clock, my dear fellow, but sit down and listen to me patiently. Villers's paper is perfectly clear and professional, although the man does not seem to know much of psychiatry. I judge from what he writes, and from what you tell me, that a severe disappointment in love, combined with a continual dread of what you call the curse of your race, has caused a sudden and violent attack of mania in your son's case. It seems incredible to you laymen that its very suddenness and violence are the best guarantees for a speedy and complete recovery. You see only the obvious and terrifying effects of this illness, and draw immediate conclusions. You

never consider that one string out of tune will produce discord in the entire instrument, and you despair of the instrument because you do not know how to tighten up and tune that string."

"I can follow your explanation, but I cannot at all agree with you," the Count interrupted him. He had been sitting in an attitude of profound attention, his head leaning on his hand. "Remember Otto's case is the third in our family. Can it be other than an hereditary taint?"

His friend shook his head. "It is nothing of the kind; be logical, and do not make matters out worse than they are. As for your other sons, Dr. Villers gives reasons here for their death which have nothing to do with hereditary disease, but rather——"

"But rather with our parental weakness,—out with it," the other interposed bitterly, rising again and beginning anew his walk to and fro, his hands clasped behind him. "But let the dead rest, Fritz; they are better off than we are. What can be done for the living?"

"In the first place, we must make him desist from constant contemplation of himself and his woes; he must be made to see that in his own strength of will lies his cure. He must work,—work so that the days shall seem too short, and he shall be tired enough at night to sleep soundly. This is the whole of my course of treatment, Max. Drugs



have very little to do with it, and I beg you to have confidence in your son's recovery. He has nearly regained his physical strength. Melancholy is the natural consequence of all he has had to go through with. His mental organization has received a wound which is still open and bleeding. His devoted parents would like to heal it at once, but how? You can only look on and bewail his fate. For fear of hurting your child, you touch his wound and remind him of it a hundred times a day. Leave him to a physician's 'must.' Hope and believe as I do, that the green of our meadows, the beneficence and calm of kindly nature will effect his cure, and go back to your whirl of city life placing a firm reliance in the power of the old home, where the ancient oaks are as vigorous as in the days when we played together, happy boys, beneath their shade, and dreamed of our heroic deeds in the future."

"No; I place my firm reliance in your skill," the Count replied. "Forgive me my inability to recognize any means of cure in the poetry of existence. Our life of to-day is so crowded with contrasts,—splendour and want, immorality and piety, side by side,—a series of wretched dissonances. It was different in our youth; then there was some room in the life of the young for nature to exert her benignant influence. But now—there seems to me a need sometimes for a second deluge, that the

present race might be swept out of existence to make room for something better."

"Oh, Max, Max, with such views as these the less you have to do with the melancholy of others the better," Edzard replied, with his own kindly smile. "I pray you to allow those who really enjoy their life and their work—as I do, for example,—to live awhile longer. Come, come, you are unhappy now, and embittered; have patience, and for your wife's and your son's sake, remember that it is for you to show no mercy to your own weakness."

These words seemed to recall the Count to himself; he took his seat by the open window, and motioned to Edzard to proceed.

"I have very little to say," the other went on, "except to make plain to you my views with regard to your part in your son's illness. I must try to show you wherein lies the germ of what you call your family curse, and then in what this consists. First as to the germ. Reflect upon your own and your father's and your grandfather's lives. You Kaldenhoffs are a warm-blooded, sympathetic race. Your hearts have always had more to do than your heads with your virtues and failings. You are instinctively brave and thoughtlessly selfish; your intellect is not profound, but varied. In addition to this you have more money than you know what to do with, and you live on aimlessly from day to day,

denying yourselves nothing. You are quick to take to the sword with an enemy, but you postpone all battle with self. Remember our youth, Maximin, and do not think me unfeeling if, in proof of what I say, I recall to you the words you used to me here, beneath my own roof, when you had won Mattea from me. 'I will, I must have her; it will kill me if you refuse to resign her.' I know I could have challenged you, but I loved Mattea too much for that. What difference did it make to you, spoiled darling of fortune that you were, how *I* bore her loss? In the cruelty of your egotism you asked of me my heart's blood, and showed your gratitude for the sacrifice by a brilliant wedding pageant. Look you, Maximin, the loss of self-control, or of force to combat self that comes of years of weak, egotistical self-indulgence, *this* is the germ of the curse that has rested for generations upon you Kaldenhoffs. And this curse consists in the mistrust of your ability to shape your own existence, and in a slothful reluctance to put your powers to the test. In nine out of ten of such cases a loss of physical or moral self-consciousness is the result. This is all I have to say, and I think you have understood me, Maximin."

The Count nodded wearily. "You are right, Fritz, but what you say hurts terribly," he said, after a long pause. "The truth is doubly hard to bear when it comes home to a man of my age.

Yes, the evil has its birth in my own individuality; I robbed another of a happiness to which I had no right. I love my wife to-day exactly as I did thirty-five years ago, but from month to month I have been more and more firmly convinced that you were her ideal, although she did not acknowledge it to herself,—that I have not sufficed to satisfy her intellectual and moral needs, although she never for an instant has made me feel that she was aware of this. Our children inherited the Liebezah! beauty and the Kaldenhoff characteristics. We were one in our blind pride in them, but I, unfortunately, could not put on the curb when I should have done so, and Mattea wished to reward all virtue and punish all vice in the world with the Bible in her hand, instead of opening her true mother-heart when her children's hands knocked at it. Thus they were estranged from us; we lost the confidence there should have been between us. They grew up finished gentlemen of brilliant parts, but they went their ways, and we did not know how far from the right these ways sometimes were. Now I know that the parents were to blame for the children's ruin. It is a fearful consciousness. Oh, Fritz! if you can, save our last son for us; arouse him to the true life. Mattea and I will be grateful to you forever."

The old man made his confession and uttered his entreaty most pathetically, and Edzard replied

by a warm pressure of the trembling hand extended to him.

“Trust me, Maximin, to do all that in me lies for you and yours. I will send you weekly bulletins with regard to Otto. Now let us see whether he will bestow his society upon us this evening, and whether my daughter has yet returned from her expedition. She rode to Elsum to make a visit and to execute some commissions. Why, it is striking ten! how time flies!”

## CHAPTER VII.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

MEANWHILE, the subject of all this anxiety was resting on the antique lounge of his little room, quite wearied out with the discomforts of travel. The apartment was on the ground-floor, just underneath the study of the master of the mansion. For a while he felt but little curiosity as to his surroundings; he was simply glad to be able to lie at full length with no intricate pattern of wall-paper to meet his eyes, but a smoothly painted surface, the only decoration of which was a well-executed hunting scene hanging above the bed. There were no noise of wheels, nor shouts of children to be heard, as at his home; in their stead only the whisper of the breeze among the leaves, the twitter of the swallows, and the chirping of the crickets in the grass, with now and then the drowsy tinkle of a cow-bell from the meadows on the other side of the grafft, and the clatter of the storks on the roof of the stable. The trunks of the giant trees in the garden glowed in the crimson light of the dying day; gradually the twilight deepened, the gentle sounds of nature in repose grew more distinct in

the growing darkness, and the air was more heavily laden by the odorous breath of woodbine in bloom.

All sorts of fantastic images floated before Otto's inward eye. He had long since regained the power to fix and scrutinize these by the light of reason, but they still possessed an exaggerated value in his mind. The lights in the mental vision were not clear, and the shadows were too black. The feminine element in the world was odious to him. He could not even dwell with any degree of satisfaction upon the thought of his own devoted mother. He pondered with morbid intensity upon every defect in her modes of thought and action, reckoning against her every obstacle which her religious tendencies had placed in the way of his pleasures. Every unjust word, every harsh judgment that had fallen from her lips, weighed upon him like a nightmare. He even persuaded himself that he had a right to turn from her because she, yielding to his persistent entreaty, had given her consent to his betrothal to a Polish adventuress, and had brought his father also to agree to it. It was all *her* fault. Faith in the love of woman, a shelter and defence for a man's head and heart in time of trial, had been wrested from him; should he ever recover it? He had no power as yet to answer this question.

Thus he exhausted himself in an analysis of his sorrow. The delicious aspect of wood and meadow that had so refreshed his eyes during the drive was

all forgotten, the hope that had dawned within him as peaceful Eichweide rose upon his weary vision was extinguished. The world about him looked a cold and colourless desert; one thing only he could still acknowledge as a blessing,—his home, with all its dreary routine, was far away; here he imagined he could ponder and muse upon his grief undisturbed. He desired no sympathy, he wished simply to be allowed to follow his own devices, with no one to tease or to pet him as at home.

The barking of the watch-dog aroused him from his dreams. He called Karl, but no one came, and he could not discover any bell. He looked cautiously around, and convinced himself that here, in a strange place, he had really been left entirely alone. He carefully examined his comfortable apartment, and discovering a low tapestry-covered door with a bright brass door-handle, he opened it and entered the adjoining room.

He was immediately aware of that peculiar fragrance that is apt to cling to ancient apartments of state, a fragrance combined of camphor and dried rose-leaves. The light still allowed him to distinguish the shapes of the huge arm-chairs around a table as huge, and to see that the walls were crowded to the ceiling with portraits. The window-panes were small and leaded; there were dark thick spots in the glass of which they were made, and ivy and honeysuckle draped the windows out-



side; indeed, the entire house was wreathed about with greenery, like the castle of the 'Sleeping Beauty in the wood.'

Otto opened one of the windows, seated himself upon the sill, and gazed abroad into the evening mist without heeding the buzzing of the gnats, that grew louder and louder about him.

Before him, besides the fading outlines of the two oaks of a hundred years, the branches of which stretched far over the roof the house, he could perceive a lofty hemlock in front of the only illuminated window of the wing of the building which projected into the garden, not many steps from Otto's post of observation. Myriads of insects danced in the very modest ray of light that streamed from the metal hanging-lamp of the servants' room, to which belonged the illuminated window.

A small group of servant-men and maids were collected here around a table, upon which smoked the evening meal. Karl sat in the midst of them, his honest, red-cheeked face on the grin, his livery coat and striped waistcoat folded with military precision and laid across the back of his chair, while he ate his supper in his shirt-sleeves. A spare, active little woman, with her hair puffed high on her head, and a knitted kerchief tied over it, tripped busily to and fro. She filled Karl's beer-glass to overflowing, and as she did so made a remark

which evidently contained the soul of wit in the estimation of the rest, for they all laughed heartily, and struck the table with their fists and pewter spoons. In an instant, however, all was quiet again, and nothing was to be seen save hands busy with knife and fork, and heads bent over pewter plates.

Suddenly another sound broke upon the silence of the calm evening, a sweet girlish voice, singing, and the irregular beat of a horse's hoofs, first upon the wooden bridge, which, from Otto's window, showed in the distance like a white phantom in front of the shrubbery, and then crunching upon the gravel of the garden-paths.

"The skies were lowering  
Above our meeting,  
The rain was pouring,  
My heart was beating  
Far from such seeming  
The joyful dreaming  
Of lives on golden pinions fleeting."

The words were distinctly audible, but Franz's passionate music was evidently sung now by the lips of a child, with no knowledge or perception of love or sorrow. The listener was indignant. Who here dared to remind him thus of this most delicious and most wretched song? Ah! he had heard it sung far otherwise, by one whose voice, in the midst of a crowd though it were, had echoed for him

alone; for him those nightingale tones and the glance of the dark, false violet eyes that had discoursed of love so eloquently.

“The skies were lowering  
Above our meeting;  
Now, blessings showering,  
Spring sends her greeting,  
And tho’ my love leave me,  
It cannot grieve me,  
For mine he is while time is fleeting.”

The invisible songstress concluded, dwelling upon the last notes as if she could not part with them. Immediately afterward she said, in a low, rich voice, “Ho-ho! be quiet, Bessie,” and quite near at hand Otto heard the rustling of a branch, as if the bridle of the horse were being tied to it. Then the speaker emerged into the strip of light beaming from the house. Holding up the short train of her riding-skirt with her left hand, and with her whip in her right, she walked quickly towards the bright window. She stood there for a moment, a pretty figure, her light hair curling about a fresh, rosy face beneath a coquettish boy’s cap. Then she stood on tiptoe, tapped upon the glass with her riding-whip, and called in an undertone, “Jetta, Jetta!”

The woman with the puffed hair came running, spoon in hand, to the window, opened it and leaned out. “Who is calling? Is it you, Fräulein?”

"Yes, yes, Jetta, it is I——"

"But, Fräulein dear, how late you are! It is going on ten. The master has asked for you three times."

"Oh, I knew you would be late to-night because of the hay. How many loads did you get in?"

"Seven loads, Fräulein, and all dry as a bone. Yes, by the blessing of God. Who put up your horse for you?"

"Ah, there's the difficulty, Jettchen. Send out Christian Siemers as quickly as you can. Bessie is there under the oak. I have met with an accident and she is lame. Christian will have to attend to her."

"God bless my soul! Here's a pretty to-do! 'Tis poor work crying up one's own brains, but if I did not dream this accident last night three times in succession may I be choked with my own soup!"

"Nonsense, nonsense, Jetta!" she laughed merrily. "Where is Christian? Is he not in there?"

"Oh, he has the toothache again, and has been in bed since eight o'clock. Shall I have him called, Fräulein?"

"Oh, I should hate that. The toothache must be too horrible. I am so sorry for the poor fellow,—let him sleep. Tell Ludolf to come out; I can do with him."

"Or perhaps you can help here, Herr Karl." And the housekeeper looked back into the room. "Our

Fräulein's horse has something the matter with its leg."

"And why not, Mamsell Jetta? that's just in my line." And the fellow hustled on his coat, while Mamsell said out of the window, by way of explanation,—

"The visitors have come, Fräulein; they telegraphed the master from town that they preferred to come out to-day. The young Count feels so poorly. Karl is his servant and is to stay here. A very good sort of a man. You will have to hurry, Fräulein. Supper is just going up."

"I'll come as soon as Bessie is taken care of. Thank you. What is your name?" she asked Karl, who had led Bessie within the circle of the rays of light, and had examined the bruised leg.

"Karl Passanche, Fräulein Edzard."

"And do you know about horses, Karl?"

"Enough to serve here, Fräulein. There's very little the matter. Where shall I find all that I want?"

"I'll show you. There is the arched door-way to the stable-yard. Bessie's stall is the last, and next it is the harness-room, where you'll find everything needful. Be careful not to wake Christian, whose room is the next. I'll come out again by and by. And now, Jetta, come into the hall and brush me off. My father must not see that I have been thrown."

"Saints above, Fräulein! You'll break your neck

one of these days with your antics. How did it happen?"

"Why, you see I wanted to make Bessie leap the hedge on the embankment, and she would not, and so she threw me."

"Not a hundred steps from the Moorland Inn! Well, well, I'll say no more. Were you not hurt yourself, Fräulein?"

"Oh, not to speak of; one or two bruises, and I strained my arm a little. I'll bathe it in cold water. And listen, Jetta,—tell Ludolf to rake the garden-paths early to-morrow morning before my father is up; I led Bessie across the flower-dike,—the courtyard pavement was too rough."

Otto left the window, when the young girl had vanished within the house, and returned to his room, where he lay down again upon the lounge.

"They're all alike," he said to himself. "She trifles with her own life and will trifle with that of others. She deceives her father and will deceive others. They're all alike."

A few minutes afterwards he heard a soft foot-fall in the room he had just left. The open casement was closed with a sharp click, his tapestried door moved gently upon its hinges, and the voice that he had heard from the young girl in the garden asked, in a displeased tone, "Minna, are you in here? How could you leave the window in the 'ancestral room' open?"

Otto rose, and stood erect and tall before the daughter of the house, who carried a small lantern, which she nearly dropped in her dismayed surprise.

"Oh, pray forgive me, Herr Count! I thought you had gone up to my father long ago. Minna has forgotten to close the window here; she is greatly to blame."

"No, I am the one to blame," he rejoined.

"It must not be, because of the gnats," she went on, turning the lantern so that its light fell upon the wall, and flickered with a strange effect upon the ancient portraits hanging there. "The gnats swarm in at the western windows at sunset, and they might disturb you in your room at night."

"My sleep is not much to boast of at present; a little more or less does not signify," he rejoined.

She gave him a charming smile. "But to sleep well is the rule at Eichweide. The only exceptions are the gnats, the wind, and the nightingales. You will have to follow the good old fashion."

"I will do my best. Can I have my servant now?"

"Certainly; I will send for him. Your candle is on your table, and the bell-pull that rings the servant's bell hangs beside the tapestried door."

With these words she left the room, and he stood on the threshold of the door looking after her with a frown. When Karl made his appearance, directly afterward, with a lighted lamp, he said harshly,

"What is the use of that lamp? This day never will end. Is it not time yet to go to bed?"

"Not yet, Herr Lieutenant. You have not eaten a morsel. I have been here three times with tea and a biscuit, but I did not like to wake you. Supper is just going up." His master made no reply, and he went on, going to the clothes-press: "Shall I put out your dress-coat, Herr Lieutenant? The Fräulein herself lighted the lamp for me. A charming young lady, if I may be permitted to say so; knows all about horses, and has her eyes everywhere——"

"I tell you I do not wish for a light." Otto cut the man's talk short. "What under the sun have you to do with Fräulein Edzard? Do what I tell you, and do not occupy yourself about what does not concern you, although I have no objection to your employing your idle time for others."

"Thanks, Herr Lieutenant; nothing keeps a man in trim like enough to do," the faithful fellow replied, carrying out his principle of adjusting himself instantly to his master's changing moods. "Any further commands, Herr Lieutenant?"

"Put everything here in order for the night, and then you can go. You can unpack the other trunk early to-morrow morning. I do not want any supper."

Karl performed his duties in the dark, waited for a while, and then, since his master did not stir from



the lounge where he had thrown himself, went softly out into the corridor. Here he encountered the master of the house, who entered Otto's room before the door was closed, and left it open behind him, admitting a broad stream of light from the hanging-lamps in the passage.

"What! still in the dark, my dear Count?" he cried, and his strong sonorous voice affected the young fellow like an electric shock. "Nothing is in its usual order to-day; it is always so during hay-harvest. Have you taken any tea? No? Only slept? Well, so much the better. You can make up now for lost time. Supper is waiting."

"I do not——" Otto began, hesitating; "I had rather be quite alone, and I am fatigued by the journey. I will bid farewell to my father to-morrow. Pray do not force me; it will make me more wretched than I am."

"But your hungry body begs for its due, and I beg for a quarter of an hour for your father," Edzard replied, sitting down beside his guest. "You see, my dear fellow, your father might well be hurt if you refused to pay him this slight mark of respect. You shall retire at a quarter of eleven I promise you. Do me the favour to conquer yourself, or rather the selfishness that prompted your refusal."

Otto lifted his eyebrows in helpless surprise. "Selfishness? How so? My presence can do no one any good; I am utterly broken down. I had

better be alone——” Nevertheless he yielded to the physician’s quiet persistence, and followed him reluctantly along the passage to the hall.

The hall where the meals were taken was a very large, airy room, paved with brown and white tiles. Three glass doors led respectively to the vestibule, to the garden on the east, and through what was called the summer-room out upon a veranda. In the recesses beside the garden-door there stood various basket-work chairs and articles of furniture; old cabinets hung on the wall on that side, filled with antique china and curiosities from beyond the sea; all around the hall were preserved the branching antlers of several species of deer, and above the table still hung the harvest wreath of the previous year. Various doors leading from the kitchen and offices, with the covered staircase from the upper story, opened upon the hall after the fashion of old times in Lower Saxony, and yet the whole spacious apartment had an air of comfort and retirement. The mistress of a household, sitting in her place at the head of the table, had an excellent opportunity for swaying the sceptre, for all who were going and coming in her dominion were continually passing before her.

The mistress of this household had resigned this sceptre years ago, and her place as hostess was filled gracefully enough by a girl of seventeen. She was standing at the table making the tea when her

father and Otto appeared. Her curls shone like molten gold in the lamplight, and the freshness of youth and health showed in her charming face. She performed her duties with quiet ease, only now and then, when obliged to move her left arm, she bit her lip, as if in pain.

Count Kaldenhoff went to meet his son with an exclamation of pleasure, and presented him to the young girl.

"Let me recommend my son to your kindly sympathy, my dear Matty," he said; adding, "You will be glad, Otto, to hear the name which is so dear to us. She seems a godchild of your mother's; may you find a sister in her."

"We have made acquaintance already by the dim light of a lantern, your son and I," Matty said to the Count. "I trust he will allow me to care for his comfort as a good hostess should. In the matter of dainty dishes, I can only recommend his appealing to 'Mamsell.'" And she quietly withdrew the hand she had extended to Otto, which he had seemed not to perceive as he bowed coldly.

The country fare was faultlessly prepared and delicately served. A beautiful bunch of wild-flowers stood between the shaded lamp and Matty's glittering tea-service. Mamsell Jetta waited upon all, and plates and dishes appeared 'as at a nod, and at a nod retired,' for there was a mysterious concealed communication by a mirrored door be-

tween the hall and the kitchen. Not a door creaked. Only once stout, red-armed Minna passed with a bucket of fresh water up the covered stair-way, to Mamsell's horror and Matty's amusement. The roguish dimple in her chin deepened as she handed Otto his teacup at this critical moment.

Even the old Count mingled involuntarily in the cheerful talk that went on between the father and daughter. Ebers' last novel, a gentle dose of politics, adapted to peace-loving dwellers in a country seclusion, the excellence of the wheat and rye crops, the latest sage utterance of the old bee-master on the Fährdammer moor,—such topics formed the stuff of the conversation. Now and then Mamsell interposed with some treasure from her dream-book or card-divination, for which she was reprovably teased by Matty. The girl questioned the old Count as to the delights of city life, of which she knew nothing. During the coming winter she was to have experience, under her father's protection, of the gay world of pleasure and of art. A season in Berlin! The prospect was too enchanting! Could young girls go alone to the theatre and to concerts and lectures? and could they ride as she could here in the country without a father or brother?

"Certainly, if accompanied by a trustworthy cavalier, and such a one *you* never would lack, my child," replied the gallant old man, evidently cap-

tivated by his amiable hostess; but Otto remarked coldly, "A trustworthy groom is all that is necessary."

"But I should prefer the cavalier, Count," Matty eagerly rejoined, looking into Otto's gloomy face with honest frankness in her blue eyes. "A groom would bore me. It is so pleasant to talk while one is riding. Do you not think so? And a man always looks better riding with a well-appointed horsewoman, especially if he is in uniform."

"Matty, Matty, do not betray your feminine preferences so soon," her father said, with a laugh. "It is early in your acquaintance with our young guest to pay him such a compliment."

"Are you in the army?" she asked, surprised. "How delightful! I had no idea of it. Of course I only know your profession from hearsay and from books," she went on, with a blush, "so my father is wrong to talk of compliments. But surely it is a fine thing to be a soldier,—one must be chivalric, brave, and devoted. And then the outside show, the magnificent horses, the reviews. Will not all this be a great deprivation to you here?"

"I must be deprived of it forever. Let me pray you to avoid all allusion to my past life,—all," Otto said almost angrily.

Matty looked at him in dismay. What did these hasty words mean in answer to her innocent question? Could this guest of her father's be one of those unfortunate patients of whom she had a dim

remembrance during her mother's lifetime? A sensation of fear made her silent for a while, until it was banished from her childlike soul by another feeling, vague but strong.

Edzard had not observed this little scene. He had arisen from table with the old Count to show him a pair of foreign antlers over a door. Matty busied herself with her tea-service as Otto looked darkly into her eyes. She lifted them and met his gaze unshrinkingly, so that for a moment he forgot that the clear orbs that shone so belonged to one of the detested sex. Their brilliancy he did not forget. His guardian angel had for the first time brushed him with her wing.

Immediately afterward he said "Good-night;" Karl entered with a candle, and led the way to his master's room.

Before Otto retired Edzard went to him once more to see that his comfort was cared for, and to tell him the hour of breakfast and of his father's departure. "Nevertheless, sleep as long as you like, no one will disturb you," he said as he left. "In the country, however, the morning hours are the finest, and I suppose you know that your own horse is here."

Otto's eyes followed the stalwart figure as it disappeared. There was something in Edzard's air and figure that reminded him of his former colonel, Konsky, who had been the idol of his regiment;

this fact gave the young fellow a sensation of familiarity with his surroundings.

For a while he lay awake, dreamily listening to the tones of the piano and of Matty's voice, that floated up indistinctly from the sitting-room. She had promised the old Count at table that she would sing for him, and although the modest performance consisted only of 'Aennchen von Tharau,' it was inexpressibly soothing, suggesting more the cooing of the dove than the yearning melody of the nightingale.

For the first time in weeks the thought 'I suffer' was not the last in Otto's mind before he slept. His slumber was profound and dreamless; so profound that he was not aware of the physician's presence when Edzard stood, long after midnight, beside the bed, carefully shading the light of his candle from the sleeper's eyes.

"Your image, Mattea," he said to himself, lightly touching with his large, shapely hand the thick black hair of the youthful head upon the pillow. It was well that the closed eyes did not open; their owner would neither have understood nor appreciated the expression of tender compassion that lent an almost feminine gentleness to Edzard's face.

When Otto waked upon the following morning the swallows were twittering as they flew in and out of their nests beneath the eaves, and the sprays of ivy outside cast flickering shadows upon the closed window-curtains. From the garden below

came the measured sound of a rake upon the gravel path between the flower-dike and the entrance-hall door.

This sound reminded Otto of Matty's talk on the previous evening with Mamsell Jetta, and of her little plot to deceive her father. He reflected bitterly, as he turned away from the light, that even this charming child was quite unworthy the esteem of an honest man. The beautiful morning was clouded over for him.

"I did not want to trouble you, darling father, yesterday evening, so I kept from you the little story of my small accident; all your pleasure would else have been spoiled." These words were spoken beneath Otto's open window, just as he had made up his mind to get up. Drawing the curtain a little aside, he perceived the father and daughter, linked arm in arm, strolling along the gravel walk towards the flower-dike.

The sunlight sparkled on the dewy lawn, and the oaks waved their mighty branches in the morning breeze. He looked abroad, and the peace of the fresh golden summer tapped with gentle finger at the closed door of his heart.

The short sentence he had just heard Matty utter was as refreshing for him as the sunshine and the breath of morning. He could not but acknowledge to himself that her share in Mother Eve's legacy of falsehood seemed to be very insignificant.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### GÄRDES.

IN the course of the day old Count Kaldenhoff set out upon his homeward journey. Beneficial and soothing as was the effect of his visit to the friend of his youth, and their reconciliation after years of estrangement, his nature was too feeble to allow of a bold leap across humiliating memories, too weakly strung to admit of forgetfulness of the unatoned wrong of which he had been guilty towards the friend who so magnanimously forgave. Edzard's unfeigned cordiality, his confident and cheerful anticipations with regard to Otto's future, astonished and half disturbed the Count. For years he had regarded himself as the martyr of his line, and of destiny, and he could not but involuntarily desire to appear as such to his friend. Only thus could he justify to his own conscience the advances he had made towards a renewal of friendship.

He took a mournful leave of Otto. The fear that this might be his last sight of his son so overcame him that Edzard felt obliged to interfere to prevent an injurious effect upon the invalid. He hastily and unexpectedly entered the ancestral room, where the

two were alone together, and announced the carriage. He found the father bathed in tears, clinging to his son, who, pale as death, was in vain trying to extricate himself from the clasping arms. As the physician entered he succeeded in doing so, and turned to him with absolute terror in his eyes. Edzard's influence instantly calmed him, but the physician judged it more prudent to remain with the son than to accompany the father to the station at Elsum.

Matty, on the contrary, declared herself delighted to play the part of escort to their guest. And Mamsell Jetta handed her a long list of matters to be attended to in Elsum, at the haberdasher's, the basket-maker's, and at the sempstress's. Her distinguished companion had quite a new sensation as the girl packed away on the back seat a large basket filled with linen cut out, ready to be made, and put on a pair of stout cotton gloves before taking her place beside him, and yet she seemed to him far more attractive than any of the girls of her age whom he was in the habit of seeing, and whose grace and beauty he had hitherto admired. For who can withstand the charm of that nobility whose scutcheon is a true, pure heart, and whose crest is a fair brow above eloquent eyes?

The drive through the fresh green meadows was delicious. The trees stood motionless, for the breeze of the early morning had died away. The dew

still glittered in shady spots on leaves and grass, the cuckoo was calling, and against the dark-blue sky rose the spire of the lonely little church in the midst of the moor, called by the country-folk the 'Motherless Church.' The fragrance of new-mown hay filled the air: the fields were full of cheerful harvesters. The honest faces of the mowers, who doffed their hats as the carriage passed, wore as cordial an expression as did that of their young mistress beneath the broad brim of her straw hat; the sparkling stream, the swift waters of which flowed beside the road, was not more brilliant in the sunlight than were the eyes of the girl whose merry laugh and talk warmed the heart of the old Count and made him feel young again. He longed to arouse the sympathy, to bespeak the kindly influence of this charming child for his son, and involuntarily his feeble hope began to cling around this embodiment of his friend's youth and strength. Once or twice during the drive he nearly addressed her as 'Fritz.'

And thus it was that this serene morning hour laid upon a careless, youthful mind its first burden, and bound it by a promise. In the egotism of his anxiety the Count could not forbear telling his companion just so much of his son's illness and its cause as disturbed and grieved her, without fully enlightening her. He never dreamed what his son's influence might be upon this pure childlike

heart, naturally as the thought would have occurred to others. Both fathers were mistaken, the one in believing his child to be only a child and the other in his hopelessness of his son's recovery, and the double error prepared the soil for a plentiful harvest.

Matty listened to the Count's sad story as to some incredible tale. One of her sex—her sisters—had called her own, and had then given up, those wonderful dark eyes that spoke so eloquently in spite of the silent lips beneath them, and had, besides, been the cause of the profound melancholy in their depths! Impossible! What had become of one so faithless? Was she not wasting away with shame and remorse in some sheltering seclusion?

"Oh, indeed! Shame, and remorse, and seclusion! Nothing of the kind," said the Count. "Even while she was betrothed to Otto she had another lover whom she preferred."

"Another? and while she was practising such disgraceful treachery? What a wicked, low wretch he must be to countenance her in such falsehood!" Matty exclaimed, with flushed cheeks.

Her words went to the Count's heart like a stab. Were not those girlish lips pronouncing sentence upon himself? Were not the innocent eyes of the daughter of the man whom he had once deceived searching the very depths of his soul?

"I cannot understand such conduct, Count Kaldenhoff," she went on. "You say that your son's

betrothed loved him, and it seems to me that after bestowing one's self and one's whole future voluntarily, the gift must be for all time; it cannot be recalled. How can it be possible to degrade one's ideal by comparing it? I—I know——"

"I know it would be impossible for you, my dear child," the Count interrupted her, taking her hand in both his own. "Do not try to understand that person's conduct. She played the game she did with Otto probably because she was bored, and wished to create a sensation. Thank God, you know nothing of these dramas of society and of their tragic results!"

"I never wish to know of them," Matty replied, and then she gazed silently out upon the fields, and the lines about her mouth grew sad and pathetic. Her whole sex seemed disgraced, and she pondered upon some means to atone for the sin of her sister woman. How ready a girl of seventeen is to devote herself unselfishly to such a mission! which is, however, rarely, if ever, carried out as originally intended.

"Yes, I will gladly promise to care for him like a sister, and to cheer him in any way that I can devise and that my father will permit," she said, in answer to the Count's request, and as she spoke she looked at him with eyes so full of truth and fidelity that again he seemed to see the boy Fritz beside him. He pressed his lips gratefully upon the hand

which he still held. "And you will sometimes write to us, my dear Matty, if your father should have no time to do so," he went on, "and tell us just how Otto spends his time, and what you personally think of his condition?"

"I will write to you with pleasure, but you must not attach any importance to my letters," she replied. "You will be far from your son, and, of course, anxious; I should fear to add to your anxiety. But as soon as I have anything pleasant to tell you I will surely write. Will not that be the best way? Let us leave the rest to my father. He knows just how to tell everything, and he always sees and observes infinitely more than I can."

"Well, then, I shall tell my wife that you are to be a herald of good tidings to us. Heaven grant it may be so in reality!" said the Count, gazing in anxious doubt at his companion.

Meanwhile, they had reached the custom-house. Gärdes, the official, was nowhere to be seen, and without his 'All right; drive on, Christian,' Matty never would allow the Eichweide carriage to pass the boundary. She was one of those who instinctively respect every kind of law.

Christian Siemers, who still had the toothache, reined in his horses and cracked his whip loudly several times. At the neighbouring station the station-master, Reithmüller, was signalling the approach of the Westerhafen Express, which the

Count was to take in order that he might make the right connection in Berlin.

Matty sprang out of the carriage and called in her clear voice into the house, "Gärdes, Gärdes, where are you? We are in a hurry!" The Count, too, alighted from the vehicle and followed her.

At last Gärdes lounged out of his house with a sullen, angry face. He did not even say 'good-day' in reply to the Count's courteous and condescending greeting, but stared in his face with a strangely hostile expression in his eyes. Matty looked from one to the other, greatly puzzled. Contrary to all custom, Gärdes insisted upon opening the Count's trunk and examining the contents thoroughly. He insisted, to Matty's horror, upon having duty paid upon a very modest bundle of cigars. "Gärdes!" she exclaimed, "you know that is a traveller's necessity," and she would have taken the package from him. Such behaviour on his part touched the honour of her home, but the man thrust aside with small ceremony the hand that would have prevented the fulfilment of his duty.

"What traveller's necessity? Fiddle-faddle! Eighty-four cigars are no necessity,—fifty pass free, Fräulein Edzard." And he laughed scornfully as he counted the bundle again. "Any over fifty are dutiable, and the—the Herr Lieutenant must know himself what is right and what wrong."

"The Herr Lieutenant?" Matty stood amazed.

What ailed the old man? Was he tipsy, or had he suddenly become crazy? The Count, too, was startled, and scrutinized the man keenly as Gärdes went into the house for his register of duties. Then he took out his watch and looked grave. "How much time have we, Siemers? I hope I shall not lose my train."

"Not at all, Herr Count; it stops at Elsum eighteen minutes. It waits here for the train from Oldenburg," Christian Siemers made reply.

"Then pray, my dear Matty, do not vex yourself on my account," said the Count, laying his hand on Matty's arm. "This will give me the pleasure of your society for a little longer."

"But, good heavens! I cannot understand it. Nothing of the kind ever happened to one of our guests before," cried Matty, looking anxiously in at the door of the house. "Gärdes is behaving most strangely!"

"Has this man held office here long?" the Count suddenly and sharply inquired of Christian Siemers, and looking up from his trunk, which, since its contents had been disturbed, closed with difficulty.

"Well, it must be nigh on to forty year. The Herr Count must often have put up his horses at his place when he was overseer of the marches," Christian replied, digging his fist into his swollen cheek and shutting his mouth, with an evident resolve not to open it again.



The Count shrugged his shoulders, locked and strapped his trunk, and searched his memory no further. He was far more interested in not allowing Matty to help him with his trunk, as she was evidently inclined to do.

Meanwhile, Gärdes returned, received the money he demanded, gave his receipt for it, and away they flew to the station. The doctor's care for his horses had to be ignored.

"Such nonsense!" Matty exclaimed indignantly during their swift drive. "My father shall take him in hand; and if I were you, Herr Count, I should complain to his superior."

"Not at all; he was right. One learns to regard these things, and even far worse than these, with entire equanimity when one lives as I do, near the Russian boundaries," said the Count, who had not the faintest recollection of the Elsum custom-house officer. "Well, here we are at our destination. You must turn round now. I am just in time. Adieu, my child; take my farewell to all at Eichweide, and keep your promise." He kissed the girl's brow and cheek with paternal tenderness, and walked quickly away to take his seat in the train.

Matty stayed beside the horses until Christian Siemers returned from attending to the trunk, and as the express-train moved off the girl waved her handkerchief in answer to the Count's nod from the window of a first-class carriage. She looked

after him until a curve in the road hid the long train from sight, and all was still around her.

Then she told Christian Siemers to drive home alone; the horses would surely be needed for the harvesting upon such a fine day, and she would walk to Elsum. The village lay on the other side of the railway-station, a good half-mile farther inland.

The breezy morning was giving place to a tropical noon. The road, but little shaded by willows and poplars, was very monotonous, with scarcely a dwelling in sight. Where a rough branch road led to Fährdamm and the notorious Moorland Inn, the sandy downs broke the uniformity of the scene. Here there were cliffs and abysses in miniature, goats browsed upon the scanty grass, and their kids leaped about merrily. Slender-stemmed harebells were to be seen on every side, and the pretty, delicate grass which the country-people call haresfoot, with tufts of wild pinks blossoming among the heather and thyme, above which hovered silver moths and blue butterflies.

"This was called the Elsum Switzerland, and your father, to my delight, christened the hill crowned by the mill behind Fährdamm the Righi; is it called so yet?" The Count had told her this during their drive, and had pointed eagerly to the motionless mill-sails in the distance. There was not a breath of air, and besides, the mill had been idle for

years, and Matty had never heard the hill upon which it stood, beside the pond filled with duckweed and cat-tails, called 'the Righi.' What lay hidden in the Count's past? What ties bound him to this country and its old inhabitants? Before the late brief exchange of letters between Dr. Edzard and the Kaldenhoffs, their name, as far as Matty knew, had never been mentioned at Eichweide, although her father loved to tell her of his boyhood and his playmates. There were still some stories told in the country round of the 'mad Liebezahls' and their lavish mode of life. Could Countess Kaldenhoff have belonged to that family? Matty remembered that she had heard Christian Siemers say to Mamsell Jetta, early this morning, "The young Count looks just as his mother used to look, except that her eyes were larger," and she was quite sure that Christian had never lived anywhere except at Liebezahl and Eichweide.

She reached Elsum almost before she was aware of it, rested for a while at the little seamstress's, the daughter of an old sea-captain, then fulfilled all her commissions and set out upon the way home.

Again, as she slowly walked along, her thoughts were busy with all that the Count had said, without arriving at any clear comprehension of it. All that his father had told her of Otto's suffering, of how it had affected his mind and destroyed his faith in woman, she now repeated to herself like a nar-

rative in a book, trying to deduce from it some rule for her behaviour towards the sufferer. Her behaviour! Would it make the slightest difference to him with his present aversion to all women how she might choose to treat him?

She paused, stood still for a while, and with a long-drawn breath gazed through the quivering sunshine across to Eichweide, looking like a dark, shady island in the midst of the verdant meadows.

"Why should I trouble myself? He will learn to love my Eichweide,—he cannot help that,—and my father will make him strong and well again. My father can do everything," she said to herself, and then she walked on, a confident smile upon her face, until she came near to the custom-house by the bridge. There she grasped her parasol more firmly, held her packages so that they were more conspicuous than before, and with the countenance of a stern, although youthful, avenging deity, crossed the bridge to the barrier.

Gärdes was sitting, in his shirt-sleeves and regulation cap, in his door-way smoking his long clay pipe. "A trifle warm, Fräulein Edzard, a trifle sultry since morning," he said, with what was intended for a genial smile, but which hardly made him less of a scarecrow than usual. If he thought to propitiate Matty thus he was mistaken!

By way of reply she held out her parcels to him, and requested, with a severe glance, that he would

be good enough to declare what duty she must pay upon five pounds of dried fruit and three pounds of stoneless raisins, since, apparently, a new fashion prevailed now, which allowed of his presuming to rummage in her guest's trunk as he had done that morning. Was it not disgraceful to detain the Eichweide carriage as if it had been a smuggler's cart?

"Hey, hey, fair and softly, Mamsell Edzard; fair and softly I say!" the old man replied, comfortably crossing his legs and blowing a cloud of smoke almost into the girl's face. "You've a fine tongue for scolding, and no wonder, for what do you know about the affair? I might say a deal, but I'll just say nothing at all, because if I should give the rein to my tongue I might not be able to pull up. But if you set store by a knowledge of the matter, just ask your father to tell you a tale of five-and-thirty year ago. Asking's cheap enough, although I'd advise you against it. And if I were to give my opinion, I'd say, 'Have a care of the young fellow who came to Eichweide with his father yesterday.' I know the stock, root and branch, and 'tis a bad stock."

"Hush, Gärdes! What do you mean by such wicked insolence?" Matty exclaimed, retreating a step. "Do you know of whom you are talking?"

"Oh, I know fine enough, and that's more than you do, Mamsell. Of whom? ~~That fellow~~ him!"

the man replied, and rising, he took the packages from Matty's hand and looked into them. "'Tis pure malice of you, Mamsell Edzard; you know very well that fruit pays no duty, and you ought not to provoke an old fellow like me to be crosser than he is. There, go you quietly home," he added, and tapped her on the arm with the stem of his pipe. "You can take a bunch of pinks with you."

He stooped and pulled a handful of wild pinks from the little bed beside his house. "There,—there are some stalks of mint with them. Fare ye well, Mamsell. My service to your father, and have a care of the young Herr; the finest cloth makes the rottenest rags!"

Matty tossed the pinks at the speaker's feet and walked away. Her anger was roused. The old fellow's rude words fell like mildew upon her wishes and resolves. Her pace grew more hasty. In spite of the heat she turned aside from the shady path and took a short cut across the harvest-field, where the mowers were for the moment absent,—taking their lunch in the old brick-kiln. She was oblivious of everything about her, and soon reached Eichweide with a very heated and anxious face.

Here she carried her purchases to Mamsell Jetta in the pantry, where it was cool and clean and smelled of fresh milk and newly-plucked strawber-

ries. Mamsell Jetta was squeezing and moulding butter, looking from the window the while to scold Ludolf for not covering the morello cherry-tree, to the north of the wing, with netting in time to save all the cherries. "Half of them eaten already by those greedy birds. Of course no herb that grows will cure laziness and stupidity!" Ludolf scratched his head, maintained a diplomatic silence, and fastened his net so close that the very ants could hardly trespass inside it.

When Matty entered, Mamsell clasped her hands above her head, and then planted them upon her hips. "Good heavens! what folly have you been about, Fräulein? Indeed, you might as well be seven instead of seventeen! Coming in with a face like a boiled lobster! Rub it over this minute with sweet cream, there out of the blue bowl; you'll be sunburned and heaven only knows what beside. Good gracious me! what has happened to you? you look fairly daft."

"Nothing, nothing, Jetta," Matty replied, obediently rubbing the cream so thickly upon her cheeks that she looked something like a plaster cherub with gilded curls. Then, to Jetta's dismay, she drank a big glass of buttermilk at a draught. "Jetta," she said, cutting short all remonstrance, "how long have you been here at Eichweide?"

"Wait a bit, Fräulein; twenty years come Michaelmas,—or is it twenty-one?"

"Oh, 'tis all the same. Has old Count Kaldenhoff ever paid a visit here before in all that time?"

"Now, Fräulein, what a queer question to ask! Why do you want to know?"

Matty reflected for a moment, then told Jetta of the provoking scene with Gärdes, her heart throbbing with indignation as she did so.

Mamsell Jetta tied her apron-strings tighter and sat down on a footstool. "The old ass ought to hold his tongue," she said angrily. "What right has he to send you home with that flea in your ear? You must forget his stupid gossip, Fräulein."

"How can I? I am not a baby," Matty replied, and a tear forced itself from beneath her long eyelashes. "What concerns my father concerns me."

Jetta nodded gravely. Then she opened the package of raisins, and began to pull off the stems before packing them away in a china jar. "You're not quite wrong, Fräulein, but there are two sides to the matter," she began. "All I know I know from Christian Siemers, and I swore to him upon the Bible that I would not tell. But 'needs must' keeps no promises, and whole knowledge is the only cure for half-knowledge. Besides, I dreamed last night that I was sitting in the middle of a hawthorn hedge, and that betokens an unexpected searching of the spirit. So I will obey the hint and tell you that long ago, when the Countess Kaldenhoff was Fräulein von Liebezahl, our master



was her betrothed, and the marriage was all settled and arranged. Then the Count enticed her away from our master and married her himself, and our master took on terribly. Gärdes grew up with him at Eichweide, and was devoted to him heart and soul, and is to this day. So Christian Siemers told me, and I take it he knows. So now you have learned all I can tell you. Keep it to yourself, and do not vex the master about Gärdes's folly; do you hear, Fräulein? I'll punish him. I'll tie all my bundles the next time under my skirt, and smuggle everything I can. You must take on a high hand with a fellow like that."

Matty went from the pantry to the pump and washed the cream from her face, declaring, like a wayward child, that she needed no remedy for sunburn. Jetta's revelations fairly made her shiver. She went about her daily occupations with an unusual amount of energy. Beneath the oaks in the garden she saw Otto sitting with a book lying on his knees. He was not reading, but, with half-closed eyes, was leaning his head back among the dark leaves of the thick ivy that clothed the trunk of the oak. As soon as he perceived the young girl busy in the hall he arose wearily, and walked slowly towards the flower-dike.

She closed the door upon the veranda, and going to the sitting-room, took up her embroidery, and sat there taking stitch after stitch, mechanically,

with no pleasure in what she was doing. She had a strange sensation of unhappiness, seeming to herself an exile in her own home. She longed to go into the garden, but was afraid of meeting there the man who avoided and detested her.

Just across the first bridge she saw him pass among the weeping birches on the bank of the grafft. Her father, who had been in his beloved rose-plantation, joined him, and together they slowly wandered on along the bank. Now and then her father stooped and plucked some of the forget-me-nots that grew luxuriantly on the edge of the water, and carried them in his hand as he walked, until a quarter of an hour later he handed them in to his daughter through the open window.

"Nothing is either heard or seen of you to-day, my child," he said, leaning on the sill and reaching in to stroke the fair curls, and the heated, troubled face bent over the embroidery frame. "How long have you been back? Was Kaldenhoff comforted at all? and did he catch the train in good time?"

"Just in time, father dear; he was very gentle and kind to me," she replied; and then controlling her voice bravely, she asked, "Have you anything to do in Elsum? Could I go with you? Ah, please say 'yes,' dearest father!"

He pulled her ear and kissed her as she stood before him, with her hands on his shoulders. "I am not going to Elsum, Matty, but to Fährdamm, to

Farmer Eggensen's, and that instantly, but you must stay at home. The thermometer is over eighty in the shade. Be thankful that you are not obliged to make visits as I am; your walk seems to have been too much for you. Otto is sitting under the oaks again; he must be left alone, child; send Karl to him in half an hour with lunch, and do not forget the Madeira. One thing more: do not play or sing to-day; Otto is still very much fatigued by his journey, and affected besides by his father's departure."

She promised to attend to everything, but her face wore a very melancholy look. "Do you know what I wish? That we were alone together again, father dear," she said, suddenly throwing her arms around his neck and laying her head upon his shoulder. When he raised it by the chin her eyes looked at him through two large tears.

"What! what! Tears? I do not know you thus, child. What does it mean?" he asked, surprised, taking out his handkerchief and brushing the glittering drops from her cheeks. "My adjutant will not think of deserting the flag before the first battle, eh? Come, be sensible, and glad, my child, and help me to fulfil the duty which I owe to friendship. Sentimentality is always to be dreaded; we must see that our melancholy guest is transformed into a cheerful one. You must never imagine that he can rob you of one atom of your

father's affection. 'Thy heart is my heart,'—is not that the case with us, darling?"

She nodded eagerly and smiled again, as she went for her father's cane, and accompanied him to the garden gate.

"Be sure that he drinks the Madeira; the bottle is uncorked on the hall table!" he called back to her.

"My father is really an angel!" she said to herself in a tone of profound conviction, as she gazed after the stalwart figure until the trees hid him from sight. Then she ran back to the house by a round-about way, for Otto was again sitting beneath the oaks, his head leaning on his hand, and idly drawing figures on the ground with his cane.

Punctually on the moment she sent out his lunch to him, and shook her head when Karl brought it back untouched. "The Herr Lieutenant will not take any, Fräulein."

"That must not be, Karl. My father told me twice to be sure that your master drank his wine." She filled a glass, and, strong in the sense of her dignity as her father's adjutant, took it with a biscuit out to the melancholy man beneath the oaks.

He sat motionless, leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, his face buried in his hands, about which curled his black hair. He did not notice, or did not choose to notice, Matty's approach.

"Pray take something, Herr Count," she said,

lightly touching his shoulder. "My father does not return for dinner until three o'clock, and you have eaten nothing since last evening."

"Thank you, no; I am not in the least hungry," he replied, without looking at her. "There is no need to serve an elaborate lunch for me. I do not like it, and I rarely take wine before dinner."

"Take some to-day because my father desires you to; he brought the Madeira from the cellar himself. Every one here is glad to obey my father, because he really knows what is good for us. And if the elaborate lunch does not please you, Herr Count, I will ask you to share mine, which is very simple."

She went across the grass to the strawberry-bed, plucked some of the fruit, and laid a large vine-leaf filled with it beside his biscuit.

"That is really too much for me," he insisted, but nevertheless he bent over the improvised dish and inhaled the delicious fragrance of the berries.

"Then let us share them," she proposed gayly, and she put half of the berries on another leaf for herself, and broke the biscuit in two.

Although the *tête-à-tête* meal was a silent one, she had the satisfaction of seeing him eat and drink, and of observing a slight change in the gloom of his expression.

"Such a journey as yours is no trifle after serious illness; to-morrow you will have more appetite," she said encouragingly, as she was about to leave

him; and when he sighed, "Ah, if it were the journey alone!" she added cordially, "Whatever else troubles you, Herr Count, can also be cured by time, and your will can effect wonders, too."

He bent his head again and sighed. "My will, my will," he said in a low tone; "it is lost, gone; who can help me to find it again?"

"The future," she replied simply, and he raised his dark eyes to hers with a perplexed expression.

"The future is a capricious goddess, a woman, and there is no help for me, nothing but misfortune, from women. I hate them!"

"Then I must not trouble you any longer," she said, with a quiver of her voice; but he suddenly took her hand and detained her:

"Why should you be angry and leave me, Matty? How could you apply my words to yourself? You are but a child, a happy child; it will be years before you are one of those whom I detest. Go on talking; you do not trouble me, and you mean it kindly."

Tell a blooming girl, 'You are a child,' tell a fading beauty, 'Violet suits you better than pink,' and both will assuredly think that they have a right to take your frankness ill. Matty was no exception to this rule. She withdrew her hand from Otto's, turned away, and went straight back to her embroidery, working away at it as diligently as if

it were an indispensable necessity that it should be finished before dinner.

‘A child!’ Why, the keys of everything had been in her keeping for two years, and she had worn long dresses far longer than that. She should always be ‘my child’ to her father of course, but to every one else she was *Fräulein Mattea Edzard*, a person whose years entitled her to respect.

## CHAPTER IX.

### AROUSED.

THE summer gradually wore on to autumn, the real harvest-time. The nightingales had gone, and the young storks were making their first clumsy attempts at flight, in preparation for their long journey southward. The fields of rye waved like a troubled sea in the wind, and the expanse of wheat beyond the kiln deepened in colour to golden brown, and its heavy heads bowed beneath their blessing. Every Sunday the prayer went up from the Elsum church, 'And bless thou the fruits of the field, that we may have daily bread in store.'

The village children ran about in recess with wreaths of meadow-daisies and corn-flowers on their flaxen heads, or gathered enormous bunches of 'genuine chamomile' for Mamsell Jetta's family medicine-chest; retiring, after they had brought them to her, with mouths and pockets well filled.

Mamsell's room, where her medicinal treasures were spread out to dry, smelled like an apothecary-shop, and Matty expressed a hope that for the sake of credulous humanity Jetta's prophetic dreams might not be too far influenced by this doleful



odour, else there was no knowing what terrible things she might foretell.

In the Eichweide court-yard all went merrily enough. The Dutch labourers, who appeared every autumn for the harvest work, were glad to assemble there under the huge linden with the maids and men-servants of the household when the day's work was over. The strangers considered themselves quite as belonging to the establishment. Whoever had overworked himself or had stayed too late at the Fährdamm inn, whoever had spent his week's wages foolishly, or had looked in vain for tidings of his wife and child at home, turned to Dr. Edzard for advice or reproof. He was ready with either, and his remedies were wonderfully efficacious, for they were taken in perfect faith as to their virtue.

Mamsell Jetta was the soul of the establishment. She made the soup and the rice-milk for the work-people, always with a prudent regard for economy, and with stern disapproval when her young mistress insisted upon more butter and sugar and cinnamon.

"Do not grudge it to them, you avaricious woman," the young spendthrift would say, with a laugh, sprinkling a thick layer of sugar on top of the mountain of rice. And at noon she liked to put her head in at the door of the servants' hall; she delighted in the long table and the steaming dishes,

and would ask, "Does it taste good? Have you all what you want?"

Then the men would nudge one another with their elbows and grin, and as she disappeared the maids would say, "Eh, but the white gowns make the young mistress fine and bonny; sure it's time she'd a young fellow to her mind. If your master, Karl, was not so glum i' the face, he'd be the very one in height and hair for our Fräulein."

"There's small need for him to show *you* that he can laugh, and that he has a mouthful of white teeth; *she'll* find it out soon enough," Karl replied, insulted on his master's account. "Let me tell you, what is to be will be."

The gossiping maids were not quite wrong. Otto still wandered about like a dark shadow in a sunlit world, although lately he had undergone a marked change for the better. Gradually his eyes were opening to the beauty of all around him in the lovely summer weather. He took walks and rides, and gazed with dreamy satisfaction upon the labourers in the fields and meadows. Now and then he would feel a fleeting desire for physical activity, as he followed with interest the rhythmic swing of the scythes of the mowers. But the desire was very fleeting.

The mere sight of a shining scythe-blade made him shudder, arousing in him a vague memory of a fearful moment, when in the midst of dazzling light

and the fumes of wine, with the din of voices about him, he had last used his sabre,—degraded it, rather. The whetting of the scythes then sounded in his ears like the shivering of glasses. The sunlight grew crimson in his eyes, and he would retire to the farthest corner of the garden and give himself up to profound melancholy for hours.

And not only at such times, but upon those days—especially dear to dwellers in the country—when it rained. Books and the chess-board could not beguile him of the sensation of unrest, and it was only in consequence of his innate courtesy that he did not flee from Matty's music, the delight of her father.

Thus weeks passed by. Dr. Edzard appeared to regard his patient's physical welfare only, giving rest to his spirit and liberty to his mind. Secretly he rejoiced in the young man's more erect carriage, more animated expression, and his reports sent to East Prussia called forth warm gratitude from the inmates of the lonely villa. Still, the invalid was far from entire recovery. When Matty asked, "Are you really satisfied, father? Will he not be different after a while?" he replied, with a smile, "Wait, my dear adjutant; wait until he rises of his own accord at six o'clock, and his eyes sparkle at the breakfast-table, and do not droop at lunch, with 'I do not wish for any,' or 'No, I thank you.' Until then, do not be disheartened, my dear Lady Impatience."

Certainly no one else would have dreamed that she could be disheartened. She provided for her guest's comfort with the keen glance of practical experience and the tender instinct of a womanly heart. She had quickly divined his peculiarities, for which allowance must be made, and the few things which gave him pleasure. Karl, her ardent worshipper, was also her faithful ally. With his assistance she gradually induced Mamsell Jetta to make all sorts of changes in the usual domestic routine; the hanging lamp in the hall was no longer extinguished upon the stroke of ten, and Otto, as his taste dictated, made use of the ancestral room—the *sanctum sanctorum* of the house—as his special sitting-room. She took care that the blue Delft vases there were always filled with fresh flowers; her hand supplied the antique bookshelves with the most interesting books from her father's library. The doctor took great pride in her demure maidenly ways, and sometimes thought to himself, "What a charming wife she will make one of these days!" One of these days, if so it pleased God, and the right man should knock at the door of her heart. Could he not divine, then, that the right man had already knocked there?

The girl neither asked nor received any thanks. She naturally withdrew as much as possible from any intrusion upon one who had denied her the right of womanhood, considering her as a mere

child. She went on her way simply and unselfishly; any cold calculation was as foreign to her as was the childish irresponsibility which is often mistaken by the world for *naïveté*. She was indeed worthy to be known and loved, but apparently this did not occur to Otto. He could not imagine the home and the life at Eichweide without her; thus much he would have admitted, but the admission would have been more the result of his love of ease than of his regard. When he tyrannized over her by constant change in his wishes and tastes, she first endured it out of compassion, and afterwards began to find in it a stolen, romantic pleasure, the acknowledgment of his right to rule. Since that day beneath the oaks he had not offended her again, but neither had he taken her hand with such a look in his eyes as she loved to dream of in the moonlight and by the low plash of the rain in the twilight.

He never offered to accompany her in her rides. Now and then the chestnut horse and the bay mare met on the Elsum highway, when the chestnut would step aside, while its rider touched his hat with his riding-whip by way of salutation, and Bessie, the spirited mare, would dance by with quivering nostrils and an evident desire to turn and try her speed with the chestnut. And yet how ready her youthful rider was wont to be to join in merry talk and laughter! It was a pity!

Of an afternoon, as soon as Matty knew that Otto was taking his *siesta* in the garden, she seated herself in his place at the oaken table in the ancestral room, and gave herself over to an occupation which, had he been really well, would have delighted him and aroused him to enthusiastic participation. She was compiling from various old documents, dating as far back as the fifteenth century, a chronicle of the Edzard family, deciphering persistently the wonderful letters and strange flourishes of the mediæval scribes, and poring with painful diligence over essays on civilization and historical charts, Otto's former hobby.

The doctor was to be surprised by the completed work at Christmas,—a parchment-bound book, its cover decorated with the heraldic insignia of the family, had been prepared for the last revised and corrected copy, and Matty's zeal acknowledged no hindrances. To be sure, she worked after a true feminine fashion, subjectively, following her own impulses rather than historical accuracy. She boldly devoted three pages to each of her youthful favourites among the long-forgotten Edzards, and outdid herself in praises of their chivalry and an enumeration of their deeds; the honourable citizens who had filled civic office, and who had often made great sacrifices to the welfare of the family, she despatched each in three lines somewhat after this fashion: 'He lived, attended to his affairs, married, and died in

peace!' Nevertheless, Matty's Christmas surprise was flourishing, and when the initial letters of each chapter were all finished in red and gold, her father would indeed be delighted, and proud besides of so learned a daughter.

Thus the days went by. The time came for preserving fruit for the winter, and the supply in the long beds behind the ninepin-alley was so abundant that it could hardly be gathered in. Mamselle Jetta looked askance when the Fräulein came to help in the pantry, with a spot of ink on the middle finger of her right hand, and laughed at the housekeeper's sermons, all preached from the text, 'What use is there dustying and dirtying yourself with those rubbishy old papers?'

"You'd far better help to store up the increase of the master's fields, Fräulein. If heaven's good gifts are boiled clear with sugar or vinegar, and put away in glasses, properly labelled and dated, it will surely give the Herr Doctor much more pleasure than all that stuff about people dead and gone more than a hundred years ago. They can do no one any earthly good to-day, but blackberry jelly and raspberry vinegar are excellent for sick people——"

"Sick people ought not to eat fruits," Matty interposed; "you told me so yourself when I wanted to take old Eggersen some of our King apples."

"Nonsense, Fräulein! raw apples are very different from boiled syrups!" Jetta replied indig-

nantly. "You know nothing about it. But do not provoke me; you'll be sorry for it; if there's any truth in cards, you've a deal to go through in your life."

Matty put her fingers in her ears. "Oh, Jetta, hush about your cards! Thank God, I've good strong arms to fight my way through! Give me the jelly-bag, and don't grumble any more, or all our syrup will turn sour."

"But why do you persist, then, Fräulein? Better give your Herr father a pile of filled glasses and jars at Christmas than all that scribbling about the year one."

"About that, Jetta, *you* know nothing," Matty rejoined, with decision; but since there certainly was some reason for Mamsell's logic, the girl sacrificed for a while her historic zeal on the altar of domestic duty, and weighed out fruit and sugar as if there were no other duties to be fulfilled here below, always reserving her morning hour of gardening with her father. He was an enthusiastic cultivator of roses, and the warm July days, followed by nights of gentle rain, were most favourable for grafting.

"I must graft a dozen stocks at least to-day," the doctor said one morning after breakfast. "Let Lina Carstens come to help you, Mamsell. Ludolf is going to Fährdamm, and can bring her back with him. Matty must have a holiday, for I am not going to Elsum before dinner."



"Lina Carstens, with her dirty fingers, at my raspberries? Not if I know it, Herr Doctor," replied the tyrant. "Lina is all very well for scrubbing, but she is not fit to pluck fruit. If the Fräulein cannot come, I can do very well alone."

"Well, well, there is plenty of water to be had at the pump, and soap is not dear; the dirty fingers might be washed," said the doctor. "But do as you please, Mamsell. We shall soon be through. Come, Matty, my darling. Where is our Count, Mamsell?"

"Why, he was off at the crack of dawn upon the Fräulein's Bessie. I could hardly believe my ears when he sent Karl for his cup of tea at five o'clock. But he rides at a snail's pace; I can't see what good it can do him."

"How nice of him to have got up so early to exercise poor Bess!" exclaimed Matty, as she drew on her long gardening-gloves. "Bess is entirely out of training. You are always busy, father, and never ready to ride with me, the Count avoids me persistently, and really, with two men in the family, my pride will not permit me to ride alone."

The doctor laughed. "Oho! who has been putting all this pretension in your head? But be a good girl, we will introduce system into the affair. Otto is evidently making progress; his unsocial mood is changing for the better."

"It is certainly high time," she said, and helped

her father on with his linen gardening-coat, put his broad Panama hat upon his handsome gray hair with a peculiarly jaunty cock, and, rejoicing to have him all to herself, went off, hanging on his arm, to the rose plantation on the flower-dike.

"I really cannot see that the Count is ill now, father dear," she said, resuming the broken thread of talk as she went on clipping off the withered roses from the bushes and gathering them in her basket, while the doctor selected his grafts and the wild stocks upon which he was to operate. "He might easily now give his nature a 'fillip,' as you used to call it. Does he not look strong and well, and has not he an excellent appetite? But he goes on throwing away 'God's great gift of time,' and worrying his good Karl, and me too, sometimes, and is always, I suppose, brooding over the irrevocable past. I think it's exceedingly silly of him. How can any one shut his eyes so waywardly to this golden sunlight? How can any one stand for an hour, as he does, looking at the colts in the enclosure, without a single change of feature, as he watches their queer antics? Oh, father, if *I* ever have an unfortunate love-affair, I certainly will not be so insufferable!"

"Yes, yes; if you do not live in a glass house you can amuse yourself by throwing stones," the doctor said gravely, as he steeped his bast in the watering-pot. "It is a well-known fact that the hap-

piest people and the most intolerant. My daughter is an illustration in point."

"I am not intolerant, father, indeed I am not!" Matty said in self-defence. "I only think sometimes of all the great historical characters who were unfortunate,—Socrates, and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, and Frederick William the Third, and the lovely Queen Louise. Did they sit idly in their imprisonment and misery? Do not laugh at me, father dear, but am I wrong in saying that the Count looks like a hero, and that I wish he would conduct himself like one and struggle against his moods? You do not know the impulse I have sometimes to put something in his hands and set him at work,—these scissors, for example,—and make him clip off the withered roses. Ah, how perishable beauty is! There it lies on the ground, and we tread it beneath our feet."

"No; we rake it together and send it to the compost-heap, Miss Matty, that, in accordance with your admirable principles, it may not cumber the earth with useless disorder, but be resolved into a true benefit for coming years," said the doctor. "You have mounted a fearfully high horse to-day, my darling, and have broken the staff mercilessly over my poor Otto. Theoretically, you are perfectly right: he must feel the need again of work; but, my child, as I have so often told you before, 'Rome was not built in a day.' A mind out of tune is not

like a cut finger, upon which you can put a piece of sticking-plaster and then forget all about it, but a mysterious something, the shape and essence of which escape the keenest eye, and to fathom which the clearest and most cultivated understanding is powerless. Therefore we hail with joy the slightest indication of improvement. A few days ago you know Otto made his appearance, voluntarily, in my sanctum to discuss with me the late change of ministry; yesterday he called me into the court-yard to admire Juno's puppies, and he persevered until he had entirely overcome Juno's distrust of him."

"Yes, he talks with the dog, but he scarcely says two words a day to me," Matty interposed. "I have never done anything to offend him; but when he looks at me his eyes grow cold and hard as a rock, and then—you'll think me childish, father, I know—then it vexes me that there is no wand that can call forth a fresh fountain of brightness from this rock."

"Ah, it vexes you, I know, that I cannot play the part of Moses here," said the doctor, making a very artistic cross-cut in his stock. "Come, child, let us attend to what we are about. Where is the bast? Hold it for me a moment. What do you say to having two colours on this stem,—La Reine and the Black Prince? That would make a beautiful contrast."

They worked on for a while without any further

excursions into the domain of psychology; then Mamsell Jetta came with two baskets which were to be filled with berries, and Matty went off to the raspberry-bed.

Upon the way across the court-yard to the pantry she encountered Otto, who, having returned from his ride, was seeing that Bess was duly rubbed down.

"Oh, my dear creature, how warm you are!" she said, throwing her arms about the animal's delicate head. "Where in the world have you been with her, Count Kaldenhoff?"

He pushed his hat back from his forehead, and looked down with a smile at the girlish figure before him. He actually smiled. A sensation of rapture filled Matty's soul; she felt like a very Moses in person.

"Where have we been? You can hardly guess, Matty," was the reply. "You will scold me, I know, when I confess that I have had a battle with your Lady Bess. We have been to your hedge on the rampart. What do you say now?"

"I am surprised! Who can have betrayed the secret of my hedge?"

"Oh, a Dryad of the garden, or Mamsell's dream-book,—I hardly know. But there is the fact."

"And of course you compelled Bess to take the leap?"

"Shall I try to impose upon you with a falsehood?" he said. "No; the jade positively would not yield to-day. She stood on her hind legs and danced and curvetted like a circus-horse. But," and he patted Bessie's slender neck, "we'll say another word on the subject to-morrow, eh, beauty? One thing, Matty, she must not be left in the stable four days at a time again. If you will allow me I will undertake the charge of her education; Karl can ride my chestnut. Moreover, Bess is not fit for a lady to ride, and if I were your father I should get you another."

"But why?" said Matty, surprised.

"Why, because Bess is too womanish,—a compound of pure caprice and whim,—the prerogative of your much-lauded sex."

The light in his eyes gave place to the old gloom. Matty hung her head at his words, but in an instant she tossed back her curls with a smile that was like sunshine. "Poor, unfortunate women!" she said. "Thank God, I am only a child, so what you say can bear no reference to me. But please do not be too hard upon Bess; she is even younger by many years than my insignificance. Good-by! I have no more time to stay. Go to my father; he is grafting roses."

She ran off without waiting for a reply. At the entrance-door she turned round to entice the cat away from the dovecot. Otto looked after the

'child' and suddenly laughed aloud, so that any one who chose could hear him.

After Matty's disappearance he went into the stable, and, to Christian Siemers's amazement, patted and caressed the wayward mare, finally pouring a measure of oats into her crib, as he had been used to do at home for his own horse after a fatiguing drill.

When he left the stall, a sensation of utter weariness overcame him. This first hard ride after so long had sorely tried his strength. He had to sit down to rest for a few minutes upon the stone bench beneath the linden in the court-yard. He closed his eyes, and shadowy twilight soothed his senses. He seemed to see the glory of the summer, the azure of the skies, and the green of the distant meadows softly tempered through his closed lids; how deliciously sweet was the perfume of the linden! how sleepy the buzzing of 'innumerable bees'! "I shall sleep to-night without bromide," he thought, only vaguely conscious, when suddenly the deep tone of a bell above his head roused him with a start, and Ludolf's coarse hand touched his shoulder.

"Do not be startled, Herr Count; 'tis twelve o'clock, and I only want to ring the men in to dinner."

Now for the first time Otto perceived the bell, which he had often looked for in vain, quite hidden among the boughs of the ancient linden. His wea-

riness had vanished; he asked for a glass of water, which a maid handed him through the window, and then he sought the doctor in the garden.

Meanwhile, as Matty passed Karl, who was polishing his master's boots in a corner of the courtyard, the honest fellow looked up with such delight in his face that she stopped to exchange a word with him.

"Ah, Fräulein Edzard, we've gone a good bit further since yesterday."

"How so, Karl?" she said, tying on her large garden-apron.

"I'll tell you, Fräulein: he rummaged about yesterday afternoon when the Fräulein was busy in the pantry. I've been waiting for him to do that."

"I do not understand you. I only know that he is in a very good humour to-day, and has had a hard ride on Bessie. We may congratulate ourselves, Karl. But what was he rummaging for?"

"Oh, he sat down by the old oak chest, which the Fräulein left open when Mamsell Jetta called her to the pantry, and he read the papers that were lying about, studying just as he used to do. 'You must get me a lamp, and let my inkstand be filled,' he said to me, and he's been burning nothing but a candle, and his ink was dried up in the stand. Now, after that, I say the worst is over, Fräulein."

"Yes, yes, indeed; let us hope so, at least," Matty replied. She had grown crimson, and in



spite of various twinges of conscience on account of her long absence from Mamsell, she could not but run to the ancestral room to convince herself of the truth of what Karl had said.

The chest of documents that contained the material for Matty's 'Family Chronicle' was standing as usual on a side table. Her manuscript lay on top. She had just come to the war of 1793. One of her favourites, Lieutenant Willem Edzard, nephew of Colonel de l'Hommel, had distinguished himself in the battle of Neerwinden, and had been killed six months later in the battle at Hondschooten, with the army of General Houchard. 'On the 7th of September, 1793,' Matty had written in her manuscript. She found the '7' crossed out and an '8' written above, and on the margin of the page, 'Inexact. Battle on the 8th Sept.; that on the 7th was only a preliminary skirmish. See Colonel Rainier de l'Hommel's letter to his sister, Margareta Edzard née de l'Hommel.'

Matty hurriedly turned over the leaves, and found notes of interrogation and various glosses scattered here and there. She examined Otto's stiff, large characters as if she wished to learn each stroke by heart. "Oh, if I could only show this to my father!" she said, half aloud, "He might have the pleasure of anticipation instead of surprise. This is a happy, happy day! To-morrow I will write to the dear old Count."

She laughed merrily, and laid her blooming cheek for one moment against the yellow old letter which hands so long idle had put between the leaves of her task. Then she locked the chest and hurried to the garden, rightly dreading a flood of reproaches from Mamsell.

"Karl," she called, as she passed by, "it is splendid! No one is more rejoiced than I."

"May it only last, Fräulein!" Karl said, nodding after her, his broad, good-natured face aglow with pleasure.

While Matty was busy among the raspberry-bushes with the exasperated housekeeper, Otto stood beside the doctor watching the process of grafting. How delicately the large hand performed its work, and what zeal and interest the fine face expressed! His hands being occupied, he held the piece of bast between his teeth, and nodded a silent greeting to the new arrival.

"Is that a very difficult process, Herr Doctor?" Otto asked finally, coming still closer. "I have never watched it before, and it really seems an interesting occupation. Would it be asking too much to be allowed to help you?"

Dr. Edzard pulled his piece of bast through a button-hole. "Not at all, my dear fellow; on the contrary, I should be very glad to teach you. The process is simple enough; the cut is made thus, the shoot inserted, and the wound bound up with

bast. There, do you understand? Now try your hand."

Otto went from one rose-bush to another to make choice of a shoot from the finest. "I cannot decide," he said. "That red rose is exquisite, but this yellowish one pleases me even better."

"Then be faithful to your profession. That is the Marshal Niel," said the physician; "or would you prefer a magnate of finance, the Baron Rothschild?"

"Heaven forefend! I will have nothing to do with him or his like," Otto replied eagerly; and as, nevertheless, he bent over the red rose to inhale its delicious odour, he brushed it too closely, and it broke off in his hand. He was conscious of an excess of childish vexation; but he controlled it, and stuck the half-blown rose in his button-hole as timidly and secretly as if he were committing a theft.

"How well that red rose looks against the blue of your coat!" the physician remarked carelessly. "Here is a pin to keep it in place; doctor-like, I always have one about me. So it is to be Marshal Niel, eh? Now show what you can do."

Otto took the grafting-knife held out to him, and would have cut the shoot hastily from the bush, but Dr. Edzard restrained his rash hand. "Softly, softly; no journey-work, if you please; a perfect triangular cut. Very well for a beginning. Now

finish your first trial upon one of Matty's wild favourites over there."

In fact, Otto concluded the first operation quite skilfully and greatly to his own satisfaction. He even went on assisting his teacher for half an hour, conversing the while without a trace of that bitterness which usually spoiled all pleasure in conversation, both for himself and for others.

"Do you know, Herr Doctor, that I should really like to be a farmer?" he said, as they sat together on the west veranda when their work was done. "Sometimes, indeed, I feel that I shall always be weak and useless, for my will is wavering, and my thoughts will not be directed into new paths. But to-day I have been keenly conscious that without occupation of any kind I am in a doubly wretched and pitiable condition. Be good enough to make use of me now and then, when I can be of any assistance to you, and I should like to read a Prussian newspaper regularly; it helps to pass the time. For any positive exertion I have neither the courage nor the strength."

"You have quite strength enough," the physician replied; but Otto interrupted him,—

"In my restless, miserable, and crushed condition, unable as I am to rise for more than an hour or two from the slough in which I am plunged, every nerve in my body quivers at the idea of anything's being required of me. How fatigued I was

by my ride to-day! and yet what was half a day spent in the saddle for me awhile ago? A mere amusement. I am paralyzed by the thoughts that torture me. You see, Herr Doctor, that I am as it were bound upon a wheel, doomed amid positive torture to turn round and round daily about my own consciousness. You cannot imagine the terrible hours I have struggled through, and how much I wish that the short period of self-forgetfulness and ease that I had just now among your roses might be the beginning of some endurable end."

The physician took the young man's hand in both of his, and, looking him kindly in the face, said, "What you say, my dear boy, is perfectly true; we will arrest that rolling wheel and deliver you from your torment." And as Otto stretched out his hand, as if to seize the spokes of the wheel of which he had spoken, the doctor pressed with his fingers the strained muscles of the youthful arm: "By heaven, Otto, you outrage truth when you call yourself crushed and wretched. Look at your well-knit figure, feel for yourself your swelling muscles, and you will scarcely need my prescription, which is that from this time you must persistently remember in action what you have just said, that a man without occupation is a pitiable creature. My dear fellow, do not allow the God-given capabilities of your mind and body to lie fallow a day longer. You are perfectly well and sound as soon as you will to be so;

repeat this to yourself constantly, until it becomes conviction in your mind. Give to the grief in your soul all that is its due, but not one jot more, and the phantoms of the night that haunt your imagination will flee before the bright light of morning."

"That's easily said, but difficult to do, when one cannot forget what one has lost," Otto interposed.

"*What* have you lost? Bits of glass and false pearls! Let them go! Let them go!" the other rejoined. "Courage, my dear boy; each hour is a step forward. When your leave of absence is over, take to your sword again after your old fashion; retire to your farm in welcome when you have reaped your laurels."

"Never!" Otto replied hastily. "Have you any doubt as to the worst loss I have sustained,—that of my honour as an officer?"

"How should I doubt what I never believed in? I know of your previous trial; I know nothing of your transgression of any law of military honour."

"Well, then, I have desecrated my sword by putting it to an ignoble use. My brother officers pity me with their lips, but in their hearts they despise me; how could it be otherwise? Herr Doctor, I would give all the rest of my life if I could blot out of existence those moments of madness; and this wish, the most intense of which I am capable, can never be fulfilled——!" He ceased, and hid his face in his hands, that Dr. Edzard might

not see the tears that, in spite of himself, filled his eyes.

"Could you possibly thrust your sabre among the plates and glasses on my table to-day, for example, and imperil my life and Matty's?" the physician asked calmly, instead of expressing any sympathy.

Otto sat upright, and looked in amazement at his questioner: "Good God, Herr Doctor! how could I possibly do anything of the kind?"

"Of course, how could a man in health act like one suffering from an acute attack of illness?" Dr. Edzard replied. "There you have the kernel of the matter, the solution of your difficulty. What man of sense and feeling among your comrades—and most of them deserve to be so called according to your father—would ever hold you accountable for an act committed during a violent attack of fever? Not one; and you could easily silence the vicious minority. Only show that you hold your sword in as high honour as ever, and I promise you that the esteem and friendship of your brother officers will smooth the way for your return to the great world of society. Assuredly it is an evidence of greater courage and strength on your part to acknowledge both illness and recovery as facts, and to enter anew upon the duties of your old profession, than if you were to lay aside your sword and bury yourself in seclusion. That, my dear fellow, may suit plain,

unpretending men, not children of great cities like yourself."

"You are mistaken; I could stay here with you forever," said Otto, drawing nearer to the doctor and leaning his hand upon his shoulder as if upon a father. Both men gazed in silence at the simple, charming picture enclosed as in a frame by the mighty trunks of the oaks before the veranda,—the flowery lawn, the shady path beside the moat, the rustic bridge by the guelder rose-bush leading across to a little island shaded by picturesque weeping birches and alders, that dipped their branches in the water whispering among the reeds.

Matty's graceful figure stood out in fine relief. She was coming from the fruit-garden, and was bearing high in triumph a huge platter heaped with raspberries, as if to represent Titian's daughter. She nodded to the gazers in the distance, and came on to the veranda with her load; here she placed it on a table, and gladly allowed her father to take off her hat and brush back the curls from her heated brow.

"Indeed, I cannot do it for myself. Look at my fingers, see how the raspberries have decorated me for my diligence," she said, laughing, and holding out to Otto hands crimsoned with raspberry-juice.

"Very pretty; but I prefer my decoration *pour le mérite* in grafting," Otto replied, showing the rose in his button-hole. "Your bush bestowed this order



upon me voluntarily. I may, perhaps, deserve it if my graft thrives."

"I hope it will!" she exclaimed, as eagerly as if it were a question of life and death. "Only, unfortunately, we cannot be certain until the spring. My merits, on the contrary, will be apparent to-morrow evening in the shape of raspberry-jam. I have decidedly the advantage of you."

"When was it otherwise with woman?" he said harshly.

Matty shook her head and waved her hand disapprovingly. "Come, gentlemen, make ready quickly for dinner, else who knows what Jetta, in her present humour, may put into the soup by way of seasoning?" She hurried into the house, and Otto followed in silence with the doctor.

Upon reaching his room he took the rose from his button-hole, looked at it and inhaled its fragrance eagerly, as if he could not have enough of it. Suddenly he plucked it to pieces, tossing the leaves upon the table, and then, as soon as he saw the beautiful flower in fragments, he repented of what he had done. How dared the demon within him venture thus to subdue him again?

He carefully collected some of the leaves and hid them away in his note-book, the rest he threw away: the sight of them made him blush for shame.

"This day must be underscored," he said, taking

out his pencil. "Folly and idleness must cease; these rose-leaves here will serve as mementos."

On the evening of this day Matty wrote her first letter to old Count Kaldenhoff in East Prussia.

## CHAPTER X.

### HISTORICAL RESEARCH.

OTTO reflected with gratitude upon the words of his fatherly adviser. He was conscious of the gradual growth within him of the resolve to exercise his will, but he still rejected with morbid persistence the idea of a return to the service and to the circle of his brother officers. At present he wished to enjoy the beneficial repose of Eichweide as long as possible, and to be a volunteer aid of Dr. Edzard in the management of the estate. He even entertained the idea of a bold scheme for settling here and restoring Liebezahl to his family. On a fine August day he walked over there alone to become acquainted with his mother's old home. He knew that the present proprietor was absent, travelling, and the garrulous gardener was quite willing to escort all over the place a stranger so ready to loosen his purse-strings.

Liebezahl presented an absolute contrast to Eichweide. All sorts of trees—copper beeches, silver poplars, maples with gold-spotted leaves—surrounded the house, which was overloaded with or-

nament; the garden was a queer, tasteless, hodge-podge of rococo and modern gardening. The shadeless beds gleamed and glittered in brilliant colours and embroidery patterns, but there were few fragrant flowers. The noonday sun blazed upon smooth-shaven hedges of box that encircled the centre of the garden in the shape of a star. Walking between them was weary work, and the centre itself, where were an unused fountain and an ugly sundial, was as little conducive to enjoyment as were the wrought-iron benches and majolica seats to repose. Marble fawns and deer lay here and there among the shrubbery, caricatures of living animals, and the free-born children of the forest fluttered and chirped behind the wires of an aviary, quarrelling for the few green perches among the boughs of the sickly young hemlock in its centre, and for food and water.

Otto left the place greatly disappointed. He would not even stretch out a hand to possess himself of this estate. Eichweide, with its soothing shade, its hidden songsters, and its flowers exhaling delicious fragrance in the sunshine, seemed to him a very Paradise upon his return to it.

"Is not Liebezahl very much changed since my mother lived there?" he asked the doctor that night at supper. "I must tell you that I walked over there to-day. I thought I should like to have an idea of the house and garden; but the stiff

hedges, the detestable flower-beds, and the tasteless modern house made me melancholy."

"I can easily believe it," replied the doctor, leaning back in his arm-chair. "The old house suited the garden, and formerly the whole—of course without those dreadful flower-patterns—produced a very harmonious effect. I have seen the place but once in many years, when I returned the present owner's neighbourly visit. It was all the intercourse we have ever had. We were not grand enough for him, nor was he for us. It is sometimes so in this world."

"The garden certainly does not look grand; no, it is excessively plebeian and pretentious," said Otto. "They must have entirely destroyed the original plan for laying it out."

"It was charming in its way," said the doctor. "I can see the centre circle distinctly now in my mind's eye, when in the spring the two yew peacocks were bristling with tender green shoots, and the Haarlem tulips were in bloom; after the tulips came ranunculuses and anemones, then lavender, and last, the rarest asters and dahlias. There were weather-beaten statues standing about, with flowing garments and lovely faces, the virtues and vices of this world. Yes, the garden had a great charm for me, but——"

"But it must have been cold and scentless,—scentless but for the lavender, and that is used to keep

out moths," Otto rejoined. "There is just such a cold, scentless garden at home, at my father's, with a slave who is eternally raking it. Eichweide is what I like!"

It was days before he could shake off the melancholy into which the sight of Liebezah! had plunged him. Then, too, there was a night of storm, after which the rain poured steadily from gray skies. The barometer pointed, as if it were nailed there, to 'wind and rain,' the doctor looked grave for his crops, and was, besides, anxious about some of his Fährdamm patients. Sometimes he would put on his heavy high boots after breakfast and stride away in a terrible pour, to look after his poor people and the wheat that had promised so well. His vigorous frame was proof against fatigue and exposure. Matty, in the seclusion of the dwelling-room, sewed busily at some bed-linen for a poor woman; she did not wish Otto to see how often she pricked her finger and sighed over the coarse stuff. In the evening she played and sang in the dark to refresh herself, selecting all the most melancholy songs; while Otto sat in the hall with his books and newspapers, or, infected by Matty's melancholy, gazed idly out at the dark mass of dripping boughs, and wished that the weather would change.

At last his wish was fulfilled. The deep blue of the August sky peeped from among the skurrying clouds, first only in a small spot, then there was

'enough for an old woman's jacket,' as Jetta, the oracle, declared, 'and no fear of any more rain.' The east wind chased away his tearful brother from the southwest; the steady rain resolved itself to an occasional shower of warm, large drops, with copious gleams of sunlight. From the window of the servants' room Mamsell kept watch over the pear-tree, to guard it from the attacks of the labourers' children; the good old tree nearly broke down beneath its load of fruit. The doctor no longer went his rounds in high hunting-boots, and the harvesting went on with redoubled zeal. Karl had asked his Herr Lieutenant for a furlough for three days. He was off at cock-crow with the mowers to the 'new lands,' and came home at evening happy and sunburned, to spend an hour or two in giving his master's clothes and boots an extra brushing.

To-day the last load of wheat was coming in from the 'new lands': the rye was all gathered in. A few drops were falling, a merry 'sunshine shower,' which rhymes with the peasant's word 'heaven's dower.' The maids, laughing and screaming, covered the sheaves, and the huge red and blue wreath that lay upon them, with their aprons.

The doctor and Matty walked out to meet the wagon. Otto was sitting on the west veranda admiring the double rainbow above the flower-bank. Suddenly he remembered the grafted roses, and

wondered how they were succeeding. In spite of the 'ripple of rain,' he walked over to the flower-dike; the rainbow receded from him and gleamed like a magnificent halo above the distant 'motherless church' on the moor beyond the Eichweide meadows. How deliciously fragrant the garden was! The shower was all but over, the dragonflies fluttered above the water of the grafft beside the bridge, the butterflies on the water-lilies opened and waved their brilliant wings to dry them, and then fluttered aloft through the clear air. This was a very different walk from that one in Liebezahl, here between hedges of blossoming snow-berry, among which peeped out clumps of striped grass and sprays of wild roses.

Otto stooped to pluck one of the roses, and Tiras, the young setter, who, with Diana, his frolicsome sister, had run after him, made a playful snap at his hand, and jumped upon him with extravagant demonstrations of affection. Then the two boisterous companions plunged among the bushes, scattering a shower of drops upon their friend, and causing the wood-spiders to sway to and fro in their pearl-hung webs. A spotted cow came close to the bank of the moat and stretched out her head with its mild eyes, as if she suspected her master's presence, then slowly turned and leisurely walked back at sight of the leaping dogs, the cow-bell on her neck giving forth a clear, deep tone. The



sun broke forth, transfiguring the world, the mist of rain swept past to the western hills, and the cuckoo's call and the melody of the thrush vied with each other in the tree-tops.

Otto's mood harmonized with the lovely scene. The old youthful enthusiasm was beginning to stir within him. He took full and free draughts of the delicious air, and in default of human companionship called the dogs to him, caressed them, and laughed at their gambols. Then he examined his graft and admired the roses blooming on every side, the beauty of the yellowish Marshal Niel and the velvet splendour of its dark-red sister.

"I must see that I do not lose the art," he said to himself, and, fetching what was needed from the garden-house, he went to work at a fresh graft. As he did so a ray of sunlight glittered upon the open blade of his knife, and in an instant there hovered before his eyes the miserable vision of his naked sabre flashing through the air. For the first time he combated bravely the horror that threatened to overcome him; he forced his hand to be steady, and he quietly completed his work. Then he shut up his knife and looked abroad into the sunshine. The crimson cloud vanished from before his eyes, and left only the clear, smiling blue of heaven.

"'Ah, welcome, blessed light and life!'" He quoted the words half aloud, with a degree of pathos that seemed quite natural to-day, although

he had never been given to the melting mood. He was conscious that his own individuality, his *Ego*, was no longer an unbridled, uncontrollable steed; he had recovered the rein that had been dropped and lost. He should be once more master of himself, should rise out of the slough of 'a mind diseased,' and have a firm footing upon stable ground, in secure paths that led to the dwellings and the hearts of men. The world was still fair!

Unconsciously he began to whistle as in his old ensign days, when, among other useless accomplishments, he could give admirable imitations of the thrush and the nightingale. A melody was evolved from his whistling, a gay waltz of Strauss's.

He was alone, and yet not alone. Quite near him Matty was standing on the bridge, leaning against the balustrade, where she had been looking and listening for some time. As he passed by without seeing her, his whistling in full blast, his hands in his pockets, driving the dogs before him on his way to the enclosure where the colts were kept, the girl looked after him, and then hastened towards the house. There was a smile on her face; the tones of the waltz still rang in her ear. It sounded as sweet and soft as if sung by her father's bulfinch.

She had only meant to take a whiff of fresh air in the midst of her work, and she now returned to the 'ancestral room,' and made ready to write again.

All about her had an extremely learned air. Most of the contents of the chest of documents were scattered on the table, bundles of yellow letters with huge red seals lay here and there, and on the right of the writer was an open volume of Becker's Universal History.

Matty was still busied with the youthful hero of Hondschooten, Willem Edzard. His portrait hung on the right of the fireplace, a fair-haired lad in a stiff red coat embroidered with gold, and with his setter dog beside him. The sun outside was getting low; its rays fell across the picture and threw soft tints from the heraldic device on the window-panes, on the clumsy oaken table, and on Matty's curls, as her head bent above her writing.

But she was not exactly in the mood for work. She pored for a while over Reinier de l'Hommel's scrawling letter, which his sister, for the easy comprehension of her husband, had translated into German between the lines.

"And therefore, good and well-beloved Frau sister, let your heart find solace and consolation, as mine has done, in this heavy bereavement,—the sudden ending of your son and my nephew,—in the knowledge that he has yielded up his soul in all honour, and as best beseems a soldier of Christ. Pray God for his abounding grace, with which I close, being called away by the duties of my post."

She began to copy the letter in her manuscript,

but it was an arduous task in her present frame of mind, and she glanced ever and anon towards the window, wondering if a slouch hat covering black hair would not suddenly appear there and frighten her away. At last she had a happy thought; she took a fresh sheet of paper and wrote :

“DEAR AND HONOURED HERR COUNT,—I take up my pen for the second time to fulfil my promise. The first time I could tell you of only a spark of hope; the spark has now burst into a flame. My father’s last communication has doubtless told you of all the important details, but I can add a matter of personal observation to-day which I am sure will delight you. I have just come in from the garden; he did not see me, but I saw him, and was greatly pleased. He was walking alone on the flower-dike with our dogs, and was in the most cheerful mood, after having worked of his own accord among my father’s roses. We have never before seen him become so cheerful when alone, without any help from society. As he went along erect and strong,—I can imagine him in uniform now, Herr Count,—whistling a charming air, I could have shouted for joy, and I longed to have you here. We must thank God most fervently for this happy change, and I hope that the Frau Countess will no longer feel lonely and anxious.

“Karl, who sends his ‘respectful duty,’ begs me

to request that you will kindly ask Lieutenant Quitzov (?) concerning the welfare of your son's regimental horse. Count Otto has expressed a wish to know of it. To the good fellow's entreaty I add another: could you send the material for the historical essay upon which your son was engaged before his illness? I think the time has come——”

At this moment Otto opened the door, and Matty had hardly time to conceal her letter between the leaves of her manuscript.

“Aha! I have caught the youthful historian at last,” he said, entering and drawing a chair up to the table. “Will you let me go on smoking, Matty, and stay here? Awhile ago I was so impertinent as to glance over your secrets; *nota bene*, they lay open to the gaze of all upon the table. I take an interest in such matters, and I think that you could accomplish what you wish with less trouble than you are taking. I took the liberty of adding a few notes on the margin. May I look at your manuscript again?”

“Certainly, certainly; I should be so glad——” she said eagerly. “I have no one to suggest a plan for me, and I should like to do well what I am working at.”

Otto nodded, drew Matty's work towards him, and then looked gravely at the speaker. “Do you know what I should advise? An entire reconstruc-

tion of the whole. Your work is done with the best will in the world, but without any system. You ought not to be satisfied with transcribing letters and documents and connecting them by a summary of facts and dates, but you must try also to describe the time and its characteristics. You must first study in some history the period in which you now, by means of various letters, wish to reproduce the figures of your ancestors, and then you will be able to appreciate at their true value these same letters and notices, and to draw from them information concerning the manners and customs of the time, and a knowledge of the great questions that then agitated men's minds. Thus each individual character will become clear and interesting to us of the present day. In a word, Matty, your chronicle lacks due sequence and connection. Let me show you what I mean."

Matty pushed her chair nearer to his and gazed at the speaker's lips with eager attention,—a habit of hers from childhood, and one which had driven a nervous tutor some years before to the verge of despair. She suddenly blushed crimson: her letter fell out on the floor from between the other sheets. Otto, however, picked it up and laid it aside without examining it; he was absorbed in his subject, and really desirous of making what he said clear to the girl's comprehension.

"You begin," he went on, "with Adrian Edzard,

the oldest known of your ancestors, born in 1581. He is the man in armour over there, is he not, with the face of a hypochondriac? You say of him, 'He must have been a cold, unbending man, and he narrowly escaped death by the headsman's axe when Egmont and Horn were executed. He died in 1610, as Master of Divinity in Bremen, after he had laboured in vain at the propagation of the evangelical doctrine in Antwerp. He married Helia Vanbruggen, an excellent woman, who loved him very much.' This is all correct, but it is not enough. I find that although Adrian Edzard was a rigid Calvinist, he was a warm personal friend of the Catholic Egmont. For these two crimes, the Calvinism and the friendship, Alva subjected him to bitter persecution. After suffering much calamity, he fled, a broken man, with his family from Antwerp to Paderhorn, and from thence to Bremen, where he died long before the return of the House of Orange or the Dordrecht Synod which established Protestantism as the national religion. He died with his mission unfulfilled, hence his dissatisfied life, the gloomy expression of his face, and the estimation in which he was held as a cold, unbending man. The excellent wife, my child, is of entirely secondary importance, except for——"

"But she belonged to an ancient patrician line, and is the mother of our race," Matty eagerly interrupted him. "Look, there hangs her portrait;

we call her 'the Beauty with the short arms.' That is the artist's bad drawing. That cannot be omitted."

"Which? the bad drawing or the Beauty?" Otto said, with a laugh. "You have not written a word about what is of the most importance regarding the 'Beauty,'—her children. Where shall we look for them?"

"Oh, in the genealogical tree," Matty replied, becoming a little confused. "I did not think it necessary to bring them into the Chronicle. How many children were there? Seven, I think, and all very uninteresting."

"Softly, softly; what would you have, Fräulein Matty? The eldest was an honoured Burgomaster, and the second a distinguished jurist. Surely this is not Fräulein Mattea Edzard's idea of a family chronicle!" Otto could not help enjoying the girl's confusion for a moment before he added, "You may omit the incomparable Helia Vanbruggen, if you like, but not her admirable sons. Why not copy that sermon by one of them?"

"Oh, we have not even their portraits. Why must I strike out our interesting 'Beauty'?" Matty exclaimed, frowning, and not heeding an inward voice that whispered to her that this subject had best not be pursued. "She was everything in the world to her gloomy old Adrian; she fairly surrounded him with her care——"

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"Pshaw! as if that were all that a man needed in life!" Otto interposed contemptuously. "Do not be too discursive, Matty. We have talked enough and more than enough of your fascinating Helia. Now we must come to her sons and to their connection with the Dordrecht Synod. Write simply after Adrian Edzard's name, 'Married to Helia Vanbruggen, of Ghent; born and died at such and such a date; the mother of seven children.' No need of anything further."

"No, that would be too ridiculously unjust," Matty insisted. "Were I converted to your hatred of women, Herr Count, my Chronicle would make mention of men only, and that would be in direct opposition to every arrangement of Providence."

"My hatred of women?" Otto asked sharply. "What can you know of that except from a single remark that escaped me when I first came here and was very ill? If I hate women, you may rely upon it that I have sufficient reasons for so doing."

"Your remarks are entirely illogical," Matty rejoined, imparting an air of the greatest possible dignity to her carriage and manner; but her voice faltered and her heart beat fast as she went on: "You certainly have no sufficient reasons for persecuting the innocent with your hatred. I was so rejoiced just now when you offered to help me with my writing, and I was so happy in thinking that at last—at last you seemed to like Eichweide, and now

you are spoiling all my pleasure with your fixed idea."

"Experience is not a fixed idea," was the harsh retort, as Otto looked keenly in her face. "You, Fräulein Edzard, certainly seem to be very well informed,—better informed than I desire. Who has told you of my previous life? My father?"

She nodded and turned away her face. In vain she tried to act the part of offended pride; her lips quivered too much, and her eyelashes drooped above her rounded cheek. How young and innocent she looked! The sight of her would have melted a harder heart than Otto's.

"We must not always hurt each other so," she said suddenly, and offered him her hand with the clear, cordial glance that was her best inheritance from her father. So peace was concluded, and they went on working together quite harmoniously. But all happiness was over for the day, and Matty's trials were not yet ended.

Otto began, with interest and zeal, to recall his historical knowledge. He made a great change in Matty's Chronicle.

"It is a pity that I have not my own books here," he said, as they were going on admirably.

"Now that is just what I wanted to hear!" Matty exclaimed, clapping her hands. "Look here at my letter; when you came in I was writing to have your books sent to you, and——"

"You? To me? Excuse me: since when and for what purpose have you been corresponding with my parents?" The tone of the question was extremely cold.

"I have written only once to your father before to-day. He begged me to do so, and I promised him, and I always keep my promises, Herr Count," she replied, growing very pale. "You offend me whenever you can, and since you are our guest I may not make you feel how much I am hurt. I am defenceless. I have not written a single word that is not justifiable. Convince yourself of this, I pray you."

She arose and laid her letter before him. What could he do but read the true, warm-hearted words she had written to his troubled, anxious father, to whom he himself had not as yet written a single line?

As he read, he was touched with remorse, but he was determined to yield to no weakness; even the fairest and the best should boast no conquest of him, and this resolution lent a harsher tone than he meant to give to his words when he said, "Your letter is certainly kind and courteous, Fräulein Edzard, but I really desire no feminine interference in my affairs, and therefore beg you to allow me to add a few lines here."

Her first impulse was to take the letter from him and destroy it then and there, telling him to write

himself when and as he pleased. But she conquered this prompting of wounded pride, and tried to remember how much Otto had to contend with. "Here is the envelope already addressed," she said calmly, handing it to him. Then she took her letter, finished it with a rather unsteady hand, signed her name, returned it to him, and put her papers away in the chest. He watched her with a strange, eager look in his eyes, and then asked when the post-bag was taken to the station.

"Between seven and eight," she said, going towards the door.

Suddenly he arose, followed her, and said, involuntarily relapsing into a cold, brief manner, "Forgive me. I find it difficult at times to control the expression of my thoughts. Will you forgive me, Matty?"

She could not command her voice: she only inclined her head and left the ancient room, which was just then flooded with the glory of the setting sun.

Otto, left alone, read the letter over twice, and then for the third time, put it in the envelope without adding the line of which he had spoken, and took it himself to Elsum. There he met the doctor, and joined him in a long walk.

"Oh, heavens! I hate him!" Matty said to herself, as she tossed sleeplessly in bed that night. "I hate him; but yet—yet—I would give him my very

life if he wanted it." And this dissonance in her girlish soul pursued her and made her sob in her dreams.

After this falling out, Otto avoided her as he had done in the early days of his stay at Eichweide, and she, under the influence of maidenly pride, made such avoidance on his part very easy.

## CHAPTER XL

### FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

"FRÄULEIN," said Mamsell Jetta, a day or two afterwards, to Matty, looking up from the apples she was sorting in the pantry,—“Fräulein, what is the matter with you? You hardly ate three mouthfuls of your favourite ‘Arrishtu’ to-day, and I am almost sure that I saw a tear fall into your soup.”

Matty never could help laughing at Mamsell’s mysterious ‘Arrishtu,’ and she laughed now in spite of her melancholy mood. “Make yourself easy, Jetta, on the score of my appetite; you put too much pepper into your Irish stew to-day, and it burned my tongue so that the tears came into my eyes.”

“Oh, Fräulein!” Mamsell rejoined reproachfully, “how can you think me so stupid? Why, the soup came *before* the Arrishtu, and I would have you know that any one who adds such salt to the soup is in love. Oh, I was just so when my heart was set upon the man-milliner who came here to work for your blessed mamma.”

Matty made no reply, but helped to pick out some apples for roasting, and then polished them

with Jetta's towel as if her life depended upon their shining like mirrors. It was so cool and quiet in the pantry: the fragrance of flowers floated in from the garden; the doctor and Otto were taking their coffee under the oaks and seemed to be having a very interesting conversation. Awhile before her father had come into the pantry, and had turned his daughter's face up to him with a 'Well, my darling?' and had then asked her to ride with them. She had refused, pleading domestic affairs as her excuse. Lately it had given her pain to be with Otto, in spite of the longing which she had to be near him, and which seemed strangely inconsistent with such pain.

Mamsell emptied another mountain of fruit upon the table; the horses were heard tramping in the court-yard, her father waved her an adieu as he went to mount his, and Otto followed him without looking round. He was tapping his riding-boots with his whip, and was whistling the Strauss waltz again.

And again she was overcome by a sense of exile; she longed for a mother, for some woman friend. Her lips quivered in spite of all she could do to control it, and when Mamsell began to repeat the oft-told tale of the beloved man-milliner, Mack, and of his deplorable death by consumption, she suddenly folded her arms on the table before her, laid her head upon them, and sobbed, "Oh, Jetta, Jetta!"

Mamsell stopped short in the middle of a sentence. "Good gracious, Fräulein! what are you doing? Has the heat gone to your head?" And she screamed to the kitchen-maid to bring fresh water. But Matty sprang up and clapped her hand over the housekeeper's mouth; her tears were dried in an instant. "Why will you tell that dreadful story over and over again, Jetta? Do let your Mack repose in peace; we are far better off without lovers and without love."

Jetta clasped her hands. "God in his mercy forgive you that sin, Fräulein," she said solemnly. "I never would have believed any one who told me I should ever hear such words from you, Fräulein." She folded her hands in her lap. "That's the way it begins. You talk just like our young Count, only the other way. Fräulein, Fräulein, take care, take care; remember that 'what the lips disdain, for that the heart's in pain,' and love is the best of life. But, oh, what a misfortune it would be if, for example, you should set your heart on the young Count! Although, for the matter of that, you are, I am sure, worth all his Baronesses and Countesses."

"Then, Jetta, since you know that my name is as ancient and proud as his own, you ought to take shame to yourself for thinking that I could cry about a mere phantom."

"That is nonsense, Fräulein; a phantom is a dead



person, and your experience has not been like mine with——”

“With your man-milliner. Oh, my good Jetta, please, please forget him! and if you cannot live without the ‘best of life,’ fall in love, for my sake, with Christian Siemers or with Karl.” And the cloud that had seemed to veil Matty’s merry humour vanished entirely.

As soon as the gentlemen had departed upon their ride she went singing about the hall, sat down at her embroidery-frame, and, when the lovely sunset lured her into the garden, forgot all her woes among her flowers. Karl came to offer her his services in carrying her watering-pot, and could not keep silence concerning his delight in the change in his master, sure as he always was of Matty’s sympathy on this subject.

“He scolds me again, Fräulein; calls me ‘rascal’ when I do something that does not please him,” he said. “I had much ado not to laugh outright for joy this morning when he called to me, ‘Rascal, what kind of brushes do you use here? Do you call those boots polished? You’d better come to me to teach you!’ You see, Fräulein, I’ve heard nothing lately but, ‘Never mind, Karl, how I look. What does it matter? Do have done with all that brushing and polishing.’ Now there was no nature or trimness in that. Cleanliness and trimness belong to a soldier as bread does to a baker, and my

master, the Herr Lieutenant, was always the pride of the regiment. Please God he'll be it again, too!"

"I must remember to get some new brushes tomorrow," said Matty, tying a knot in her handkerchief. "Did your master speak of wishing for anything else, Karl?"

"Oh, no, Fräulein; what could he wish for?" Karl replied. "Yes, one thing he did say,—he did not like to hear singing going on every day."

Matty grew crimson, and emptied an entire watering-pot of water on the head of an unfortunate aster.

"Saints above, I've been too bold!" Karl said, by way of excuse. "I hope the Fräulein will not take it amiss of the Herr Lieutenant. You see his betrothed, who treated him so badly, sung like a lark, they say, and perhaps he can't forget it."

"There they come," Matty interrupted him, having just registered a silent vow that she would take nothing amiss; that she would endure anything that could smooth the way for the return to his own home and people of this man who spoiled all the pleasure of life for her. And yet she was conscious of an instant anxiety when she saw that her father had returned without his disagreeable guest.

Karl ran to the entrance gate to help the doctor to alight. "Are you alone?" Matty asked, as her

father joined her in the garden. "What have you done with him? Is he not coming home to tea?"

"Of course he is, darling," he replied, drawing her hand within his arm and walking with her to the moat, and across the bridge to the Guelder rose-bush. "He is now perfectly sound and well to all intents and purposes, and can try his wings as he pleases, the more independently the better. In a few weeks, my darling, he will go home, I think, and then you will be alone with your old father again. What—what do you mean by hiding your face, Matty? Look at me. Must I feel your pulse and write you a prescription? or—— Have you any confession to make, my child?"

They sat down together on the bench beneath the willows, their arms clasped around each other like a pair of lovers. Matty sat upright after a few moments, pushed back her father's hat from his forehead, and looked tenderly into his clear, searching eyes. "Yes, father," she said, and her sweet voice sounded veiled, "there is, perhaps, something to confess, but I cannot—I cannot give it words. You know—you must know what it is, father dear. At first I pitied him so; and then—then I was angry with him. I thought I hated him; but—it is not hatred. If it were not for his eyes and the sound of his voice; if he were only some one else except himself——! But never mind, father dear! My pride will make it all right for me,—

and I have you! I will never, never leave you,—we shall always be together.”

“My child, heaven will help you; only always be frank and honest with me,” he said, stroking the cheek that leaned against his shoulder. “No, we will say nothing more about it; many words make small griefs great, and I have perfect confidence in your sound, healthy nature; you will forget the spell in those eyes, and learn to think of them calmly. Others have had the same task set for them, my child, and have accomplished it.”

Both were silent for a while. Dr. Edzard was thinking of the eyes of the mother of his guest, the magic eyes of the Liebezahls, and Matty of the departure which ought to have brought her peace, and instead threatened to destroy it for her forever.

“He stays out late.” Dr. Edzard at last broke the stillness. “His horse cast a shoe, and Hans at the custom-house took it to the blacksmith’s for him. He stayed with Gärdes, and insisted that I should not wait for him.”

“Oh, father, with Gärdes!” Matty exclaimed. “How did Gärdes behave to him?”

“As rudely as possible; but our friend has a cool, easy way with him that evidently made an impression upon the fellow. You see, Otto has his mother’s face, and those wild lads, Kurt and Richard Liebezahl, when they lived here, played many a mad prank upon their former playmate, Hinnerk

Gärdes, and treated him sometimes with arrogance. That has embittered him towards the whole family."

Matty looked up anxiously at her father, and her lips moved, but she said not a word. "Come, come, my darling, forget your troubles, chase away that frown; you have something better to do in the world than to invent trials for yourself," he said, rising, and beginning to talk of other things. She answered him in monosyllables, and cast stolen glances through the trees now and then, in hopes of a glimpse of the chestnut and his rider. She would have liked to have Bess saddled and to ride off to the border-house. For what? To prevent mischief? What could she do? She sat quietly beneath the willows and gazed abroad into space.

## CHAPTER XII

### GÄRDES RELIEVES HIS MIND.

WHEN Dr. Edzard left him, Otto seated himself upon the bench beneath the tree growing before Gärdes's house, to await the return of Hans with his horse. A long clay pipe and a small pouch filled with tobacco were lying on the bench beside him. Their possessor, however, as soon as the physician disappeared, gathered them up in sullen haste and prepared to go within-doors.

"But I beg you, Gärdes, not to let me drive you away," said Otto. "You are master here, and unfortunately I cannot bear the heat well yet, and there is no shade anywhere else. We can pass ten minutes together without quarrelling, it is to be hoped, eh?"

"That is a question," Gärdes replied rudely. "I do not want to have anything to do with you or yours, and it goes against the grain with me to have you sitting here beside me." And he turned his back upon Otto, and stood squarely upon the threshold of his door.

For a moment Otto had the teasing buzzing and singing in his ears that now and then reminded him

that he was not yet perfectly strong again. He felt quite sure that the old man's churlish inhospitality was not causeless, but that it was the result of personal hatred, and he determined to discover the reason for this hatred.

"Gärdes," he said, approaching the old man, and leaning, whip in hand, against the door-post, "I must have an explanation of your words. You, of course, understand that I will not allow myself to be insulted with impunity, whether the insult come from high or low. I remember now that on the day of our arrival in Elsum you treated my father with great disrespect. I must know your reason for doing so."

The old man laughed his short, shrill laugh, turned round, and fixed his clear eyes upon the face of his questioner. "'*I must* and *I will*!' And what is there to *must* and to *will* about? You sing precisely the same tune that your father, yes, and your mother, too, sang, my Herr Count. If you think to get what you choose out of me with your high and mighty airs, you'll find yourself infernally mistaken, young Herr."

Otto frowned and bit his lip. He knew perfectly well how to deal with a hard-mouthed horse, but what should he do with this hard-mouthed old man?

"Listen, Gärdes," he said, after a short pause for reflection, tossing his whip down on the bench and

confronting the man. "If I assure you that I know nothing of the relations of my family with this part of the country, except that years ago my mother's family had their home here, and that my father was a lieutenant in the Lübberswerder Hussars, perhaps you will give me a hint as to what tune I must sing to induce you to tell me what I wish to know. I wish to remain nowhere where I feel that my father and myself are regarded with hostility."

"Well, now, that's speaking fair enough, young Herr," the old man rejoined. "Neither would I stay here if I were in your place, if I knew what it must cost the doctor to put a good face upon having you to break bread beneath his roof. The apple cannot fall far from the bole, but the apple-tree ought not to toss its apple into a strange orchard. And that's the way with you at Eichweide. You do not belong there, Herr Count, and your father knows it, and it's just like him to play Dr. Edzard another trick. The first one was bad enough."

"I do not understand a word of all this. What happened between my father and Dr. Edzard so bad that its consequences concern me?" Otto asked. "Let me beg you to explain it to me clearly, without circumlocution or comment. If you refuse to do this in compliance with my request, I shall know how to compel you to do as I wish. Your words to me to-day give me a right to demand a reckoning with you."



"Reckon away, I have said nothing but the truth," the old man interrupted him. "Do what you will, 'tis the same to me. Thunder and lightning, young Herr! what do you question me for, if my answers do not please you?" He planted himself in his doorway, and scanned Otto keenly. "I know your kind; if one of us dares to speak to you without cringing and fawning like a dog, your fingers itch to lay your stick across his face. Yes, yes, pick up your plaything there. You look just like your uncles Liebezahl, and if you take after them there's no use in telling you the truth, and—and—your honour——"

"Hush, man! Tell me the truth, or I may forget myself!" Otto exclaimed, actually trembling in his effort to control himself. He threw down the whip he had picked up, and seized the old man by the wrist. "The honour to which you dare to allude must be untouched; the doctor is my benefactor, my father's friend——"

"Oh, yes, oh, yes; a friend indeed! Our blessed Lord Himself could hardly be a better," Gärdes said, clasping Otto's detaining hand with his free one in a grip like a vice. "Hands off, and begone! Do you think to hector me, young Herr? Two can play at that game."

Thus they stood for a couple of seconds, the eyes of each fixed upon the other; then Gärdes dropped his hand, and said sullenly, "No offence, Herr

Count: you mean honestly; I see it in your eyes. It would be a pity for you to leave a name here like your father's. Well, well; the last who remember it will soon be dead,—time flies! Sit down there quietly and I'll tell you all about it, for forewarned is forearmed at all times and seasons."

Otto remained standing where he was. He looked cold and haughty as he leaned against the door-post, his arms crossed, his dark, well-poised head showing doubly dark in the light of the setting sun. "Thank you, I will listen here," he said briefly, picked his whip up from the ground and held it under his arm. A reaction had followed his sudden fit of anger, and although he was still fully alive to the man's insolence of manner, he was glad that he had not been quite carried away by his indignation.

Gärdes filled his pipe afresh, then stood motionless, gazing abroad upon the quiet landscape silently, until Otto's impatient 'Well?' roused him from his reverie. He stood beside the young man in the doorway, and pointed towards the west with the stem of his pipe: "Do you see that bit of shrubbery there to the left of Liebezahl, between the forest and Eichweide? When I was a young fellow I was passing by there one evening in October; we had just had the first frost of the season. I was out on a job for the old Herr Edzard,—on the track of two rascals who had stolen some hams from his smoke-house and some spoons from his kitchen,—and I made sure

of surprising them with their booty at the 'Moorland Inn.' That was where I was going. All the lazy rogues about were sure to be at the 'Inn.' The father-in-law of her as keeps it now kept it then, and was a rare old smuggler himself,—we never could catch him at it, though. Ay, old Herr Edzard—he's dead and gone now this many a day—thought a deal of me; I used to run about the court-yard with his Fritz when we were lads,—real playmates we were. That evening the old Herr said to me, 'Hinnerk,' says he, 'if you're going to the Inn, take this letter from our Fritz to my daughter-in-law that is to be at Liebezahl. I don't want to send one of the men, they're busy threshing.' Well, I wrapped the letter up in my handkerchief and put it in the crown of my cap, and went across the dike towards the shrubbery, thinking to pass through it and round by the Liebezahl court-yard to the Inn. You must know, Herr Count, who it was whom the old Herr called his daughter-in-law to be, and who was Fritz Edzard's betrothed?"

"How should I?" Otto replied, but little interested, and thinking that it was probably some governess or companion in the Liebezahl household.

"Yes, yes, it was your lady mother," the old man said, and there was an expression of cruel exultation in his eye as he observed his hearer start and change colour, while his hand grasped the handle of his

riding-whip. "Yes, your lady mother," he went on. "The marriage was to be the next Easter, and the young master, Fritz, was just passing his examinations. Well, I came to the shrubbery. Over there, you see, just beside the footpath to Liebezahl, where they have planted the clump of pines, there was a bench hidden behind a tree,—it's there to this day. There I heard talking and laughing, and I saw a man's light coat and a girl's white gown through the bushes, close together. *He* was sitting on the bench and she beside him, exchanging kisses, with no thought of any one else in the world beside. It was rarely, indeed, that any one passed by there. The man was your father, my young Herr, and the girl is your mother, and was Fritz Edzard's betrothed. Saints above! but they started away from each other when I stood before them and all was found out. I could hardly keep my hands off them there and then, only I never was the man to do harm to a woman.

"What do you want? Why are you spying round here?" your Herr father roared out to me, and I said to myself, 'Softly, softly, Hinnerk Gärdes, what business have you with fine folks' affairs?' So I just handed her the letter and gave her old Herr Edzard's compliments and turned my back upon them. Then he said to her, 'Give me the letter,' says he; 'we'll read it by and by,' and then he takes out his purse and offers me a Prussian thaler. A thaler for bringing the letter? No. You see he

wanted to buy my silence, and I threw the thaler away before his eyes, and spat on the ground, and went my way. Then she came running after me with her black eyes bigger than ever, and a face like the wax Judith at the fair, and said she, 'Gärdes, Gärdes! for heaven's sake do not betray me at Eichweide; it is all a misunderstanding!' And she would have had me shake hands upon it, and stretched out her lily-white fingers, but I would not take them, and only asked her whether the kisses were part of the misunderstanding, but that it was nothing to me.

"But in the evening when I passed by the bench in the dark, angry enough that the rascals had escaped me at the Inn, I was low about Fritz Edzard. I sat down at home and wrote to him in Berlin, and told him everything. You see, Herr Count, your mother's brother, Dick Liebezahl, had abused me shamefully before this when I was in the Lübberswerder Hussars, and he was my lieutenant, and so I disliked the whole family, and it pleased me to play them an ill turn if I could. Well, everything was broken off between Fritz and his sweetheart, but I knew nothing of it until the end of November. Then, one night, I and my comrade Jan Steinwehr came upon a half-dozen scoundrelly smugglers, and we had a hand-to-hand fight, and one of them gave me a blow that I thought would have finished me in an hour, and the whole of them got off with their

booty scot-free. Steinwehr took me into the first cottage by the roadside, and ran as fast as he could for the Elsum doctor. He couldn't find him,—he was somewhere playing cards,—and instead he met Fritz Edzard wandering about the country alone in the dark. And he brought him to me. I did not know that he was at home. In spite of my pain I could not but see that he looked God-forsaken, but he bandaged my hurt gently, and told me that he would stay with me all night. That was a powerful long night, Herr Count, and the wind howled and the rain poured outside as if the world were coming to an end. And I was sure all the while that I never should get over the wound in my breast. I lay groaning there and calling out 'Fritz, Fritz, I am the wretchedest of God's creatures!' when suddenly he laid his hand on mine, and it shook as if with fever as he said, 'Hinnerk, I am far more wretched than you, far more! I have lost what is dearer to me, a million times dearer, than life itself!' And he walked to the window, and I could see his shoulders shake with agony. He was never a fellow for whining; when he complained it meant a deal. As long as I live, Herr Count, I never shall forget that night, nor the care that I had, for Fritz tended me for five days, and no living soul knew of it except Steinwehr and the Elsum doctor, who was, after all, no better than a goose. I owe my life to Fritz Edzard. That time filled my heart with hatred

of your father and of the false, cursed Liebezahls, and at your mother's marriage I buried the carcass of a dog before the church-door, and wished over it that she might suffer seven times over all that she had made Fritz Edzard suffer. And she stepped directly upon the spot beneath which the carcass lay. I watched her do it. I don't know whether my wish came true, but I reckon our Lord God has been just."

"It has 'come true,'" Otto said in an almost inaudible voice, and without looking up. He was tortured by a feeling that he could scarcely analyze, a disgust that was almost physical. He bent his riding-whip in his cold hands until it snapped; he would have given the world, it seemed to him, for a glass of water, so deadly was his sense of weakness; but it never occurred to him to ask this pitiless old man for it. And the worst, the most unendurable part of the whole affair was the stamp of undeniable truth that characterized the narrative he had just heard. He shuddered, seeming to be involved in a net of falsehood and deceit to which each year had added fresh meshes; every kindness, every care that had been bestowed upon him at Eichweide, was a burden now upon his memory.

Gärdes, pausing between the puffs of smoke from his pipe, added various admonitory remarks to his tale, but Otto paid no attention to them. He gazed into the crimson of the western skies with eyes so

filled with melancholy that the old man half repented his rashness.

At last Hans made his appearance with the chestnut from the blacksmith's, and Otto collected himself and took his leave with cold courtesy.

"Good-day, Herr Count, and do not take the matter too much to heart," said Gärdes; "you might have heard it all from any one hereabouts."

"It is best as it is," Otto replied. "I look at these events from a different point of view from yours, and if you were to see my mother now you would not judge her so harshly."

Gärdes shrugged his shoulders. "Right is right; no man can alter that," he said. "I'm too old now to be turned hither and thither like a weathercock. The thoughts I have now will be buried with me. Do you do better, Herr Count. Farewell!"

He held the stirrup for him, and cut him a strong willow wand to replace his broken whip.

"By God, that fellow shall not play any pranks with our merry Mamsell Edzard. I have settled his business for him," he muttered, as Otto rode away, and as he spoke he knocked the ashes out of his pipe with an air of supreme satisfaction.

Otto dropped the bridle on the neck of his horse and let it wander as it would, scarcely restraining it when it stooped its head to crop the fresh green grass by the roadside.

His heart felt sore, his honour tainted; he was



ashamed of his parents, of his own existence. His indignant thoughts turned painfully from one consideration to another, in hopes of discovering some point of light that could illumine the dark images that filled them. Suddenly there arose before his mental vision his mother's face as he had seen it day after day, and night after night, bending above his sick-bed. He saw her eyes watching and weeping for him; he felt her constant care, that never asked for thanks, and had never received them, and the awakening consciousness of the debt he owed her was a consolation to him in this most painful hour. What misery his trial must have cost her, remembering as she did that she had caused Fritz Edzard the like pain! This he now knew for the first time.

He felt that he had no right to blame his father. He knew too well what it is to be resolved to win a woman whose spell is around one, how the way to her must be found, even although it lies over the crushed heart of a friend. But these wild times and passions lay behind him forever in the past. He gazed out upon the quiet, lovely landscape, over which the evening twilight was casting a soft veil, and the 'drowsy tinklings' of distant cow-bells and the droning of tiny insects, that swarmed before him in the mild air, seemed to whisper 'Rest,—peace.' Nevertheless, he had a sudden attack of cowardice as he rode beneath the boughs of the old trees be-

side the Eichweide hedge and into the court-yard. Matty's figure detached itself from the dark shade beneath the linden in the court-yard, and came directly towards him. "What has happened? Where have you been?" she cried, holding out her hand, as if to help him alight. "We have been anxious about you," and her voice trembled, and there was a sound of tears in it.

"Anxious about me? My child, it was quite unnecessary," he said, springing from his horse and giving the bridle to Karl; "I am of age and—— Bad weeds are sure to thrive."

He spoke jestingly, but his tone was nevertheless bitter, and the frowning brow contradicted the smiling mouth. Matty did not dare to look at him for fear she should disgrace herself by crying. She led the way into the hall. There the tea-kettle was singing its song of welcome, and the bunch of roses on the tea-table called out to him, 'Enjoy the summer of life.'

He looked pale and thoughtful, said but little, and ate and drank almost nothing. The moon rose outside full and clear, and the cry of the quail from the edge of the forest mingled with the chirp of the crickets in the quiet air.

"Let us go into the garden," said the doctor, when the meal was ended, slipping his hand under his guest's arm, and holding out the other to Matty.

"What has annoyed you, my dear boy?" he

asked Otto. "I hoped a pleasant evening would end this fine day. Do not turn away. Come, let us hear all about it."

"I cannot tell any one but yourself," Otto replied, his voice trembling slightly. "Let me speak with you alone, Herr Doctor. I want to hear from yourself whether all is true which this man Gärdes has——" He paused suddenly, shook his head, and turned away. The doctor's face had grown very grave; with a slight pressure he released Matty's hand, and then walked on with Otto around the lawn to the white bench opposite the house. There they sat down.

Matty stood motionless for a moment, then turned back into the hall, where Mamsell Jetta, standing at the stone table, was washing the tea-cups; Matty insisted upon keeping her talking the while in a steady stream about various indifferent subjects until the housekeeper, having finished her work, lit her lamp and retired to her room in the wing.

"Be still ! be still !" Matty said to herself, gazing out across the moonlit lawn to where the two men were still sitting on the white garden-seat. She leaned her hot cheek against the window-pane. "I know what they are talking of. Oh, heavens ! how I suffer with you, Otto, my love, my love !" she whispered, and her childlike face seemed to grow older beneath the weight of the loving sympathy

which filled her heart. In her distress for his sake she seated herself at the piano and began to play the air of a little song and to murmur snatches of it in an undertone :

“ Persecution and sickness, and sorrow and pain,  
To loosen the knot of our love are in vain.”

In the midst of the verse she paused, remembering what Karl had told her of his master's distaste for music. She sprang up, and could no longer endure the thought of the shadowy figure on the seat across the lawn. She turned from the window and took refuge in the more retired ancestral room.

The moonlight here gleamed through the coloured panes of the casement and revealed the antique furniture. She lit a lamp and stood for a while before the portraits of her father and mother, taken just before their marriage. Her father's grave face seemed to start forth from the canvas, and her mother's eyes smiled above the pale lavender of her dress. How well they harmonized with the rest of the dignified assemblage ! Matty grew calm as she looked at them, and she set to work at her manuscript with eager diligence. She was still at that blessed age when the light of hope shows grief to the door of the heart and makes bright the night within.

She worked away, deciphering and copying one of the old letters, until she heard her father's voice

calling, "Matty, Matty, where are you?" At the same moment Otto entered. He seemed very weary, his face spoke of great pain not yet overcome, but his eyes had never looked so kindly as now into those of the girl raised in anxious questioning.

"Good-night, Matty," he said, and took her hand. "Your father is calling you. My child, I pray you look upon me if you can as your friend, your brother. I should like to show you how different are my thoughts from what they have seemed until now."

"Thanks, thanks. I too will try to be as I should be, not whimsical and capricious as I have been," she stammered, and got as far as the door, when she turned and, taking his hand in hers, said hurriedly, "Promise me one thing, that you will not be troubled about what Gärdes told you. We loved my mother so dearly, my father and I. There is nothing to be atoned, not the least thing. Good-night, good-night!"

He looked after her, bewildered, and then watched her from the window as she flew across to the flower-bank, light and lithe as a fairy. Her father came across the bridge in the bright moonlight, and his daughter threw her arms about his neck. Thus the two figures stood melted into one, as it were, for a moment. Suddenly to the man looking from the window of the ancestral room there came an ardent longing to stand there in the father's place, to know

that from that innocent heart there could be breathed anew the freshness and fulness of life into his own now so empty and dead. He gazed up at the moonlit device of the Edzards in the middle window. '*In fide robur*:' thus ran the motto of the old patrician family, and it stood clearly legible above three stars in an azure field. Actuated by a sudden impulse Otto went for his mother's miniature, and held it between those of the master of the house and of his dead wife. "Thus it should have been, mother," he murmured, and his mother's dark eyes no longer seemed to look cold and proud, but appeared to gaze at him from the picture with tender entreaty. "Yes, so it should have been. I, the son of this house, she, my sister; the patrician device instead of the Count's coronet." He wandered from portrait to portrait, tracing in those of the men the family characteristics of sagacity and firmness, and observing the timid grace of fair women crowned with modest coifs, or the energy in stronger features, the eloquent eyes beneath powdered hair and roses. It was a line of ancestry upon which their descendants might well look with pride, extolling its strength and integrity.

"Give me back my faith in your sex, mother, and I will repay your love with interest," he said, gazing with profound melancholy at his mother's picture.

Suddenly, beneath the window, Matty's voice called 'good-night!' in as clear and cordial a tone

that he, forgetting that it was for her father, leaned out quickly and called 'good-night' in reply. In surprise she looked up at him, and gave him a smile which he took with him into the land of dreams. He left the door between his chamber and the ancestral room open, and his last conscious look fell upon the Edzard device and the motto '*In fide robur*,'— 'Strong in fidelity.' Towards morning he waked, startled from uneasy dreams. He rose, dressed, and in the light of early dawn wrote a long letter to his mother, marked it 'private,' directed and sealed it.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### GÄRDES REPROVED.

It would be an impossible task to tell of what went on in Dr. Edzard's soul as he paced his study and the library to and fro all through this moonlight night, now and then leaning from the window and gazing into the silvery distance, as if the radiant air could take shape for him as an angel of aid and counsel. For the first time he felt powerless: his courage failed him with regard to his motherless girl.

Had he corresponded to the popular idea of a model father he would simply have removed the cause of the danger, or have sent his daughter away upon a visit, enjoining it upon her to forget; but such a course of action was not in accordance either with his character or with his principles. The physician and the father struggled within him for the mastery.

"You have undertaken the treatment of this case, and you must see it through," said the physician. "Your firm conviction is that this is the spot, these are the surroundings, where your patient can attain to complete recovery, but—without the sunny glances of your child you undertake a dreary task." "And



yet," said the father, "would it not be best to work out the dreary task, lacking those sunny glances, for the sake of the heart, the very fountain of the sunshine?"

He went on pacing the rooms to and fro, his head bent, his hands clasped behind him. Was she, perhaps, to share his lot—to feel the pangs in her young heart that had tortured his own long ago, when he had been compelled to tear thence the first ardent love that had taken root there? Good God! what it had cost him, man though he were, to forget, to overcome! And righteous indignation had come to his aid, while she would have to live on and on beneath the spell of the Liebezahl eyes without that grim helper that slays passion with passion.

Those eyes,—“Even I have never been able to forget you,” the old man murmured to himself, and he took Mattea Kaldenhoff’s photograph from his portfolio. “Why do you persecute me so? Why do my greatest sorrows come to me through you?” he thought, and he frowned as he gazed into the beautiful dark eyes of the little picture. “No, I do you an injustice, Mattea. You could not dream that I had a daughter who would love your son, nor could I coldly calculate and refuse your request. He knew well what he was doing when he made that request come from you. *Homo sum! homo sum!* And my child is of my blood,” so his thoughts ran

on. "She has given away her whole heart, as I gave mine; but—can she be expected to possess the cool, masculine strength that conquered a place in the heart for prosaic reason,—nay, enthroned it there as conqueror? Oh, if she were only calm, clear, collected, as was her mother, who shed such peace into my soul! Yes, were you but living, Elizabeth, you would guard her for me."

Again he reviewed the past evening, and the hours on the garden-seat, when Otto, bowed to the earth with shame and indignation, had recounted to him all old Gärdes's venomous revelations. The young man had taken upon himself as his own all his mother's fault, and had shown his host only too plainly how insufferable, how humiliating for him was the magnanimity with which he had been treated at Eichweide. And yet in his very entreaty, "Let me atone for the wrong wrought by my mother, and forgive her. Life has brought her bitter penance!" there was assured victory for the physician, who saw the morbid fancies and unnatural ideas of his patient vanish and give place to natural emotions under the influence of the heroic remedy which the shock caused by Gärdes's story had proved to be for Otto.

"Everything was forgiven long ago," Edzard had said. "If you will talk of atoning, do so by conquering your pride, and, without a second thought, continue to enjoy what you very incor-

rectly style my magnanimity, until I bid you farewell,—a man in perfect health.”

Upon this they had shaken hands, and Dr. Edzard felt himself committed to a course of action from which he was not the man to recede. His dead wife’s favourite distich occurred to him :

‘ Much, but not too much, be thy care.  
All is as God wills, never fear !’

He sat down in an arm-chair, closed his eyes, and tried to woo the slumber that would not come. At last he gave up the attempt, lit his lamp, took up a pathological work that had lately appeared, and began to cut the leaves and to look through it.

Outside, the moon was setting,—a round, fiery ball,—and the pearly gray dawn was struggling above the misty meadows with the first pale streaks of yellow in the eastern sky. Cocks crowed and cattle lowed after a melancholy fashion; the birds preened their feathers among the dripping branches and tuned their throats. With the first ray of red gold that stole into the library through the trembling leaves of the ash-tree the court-yard awoke to life. The bell in the linden rang out its clear call to the labours of the day.

The doctor closed his book, put out the light, and went softly down into the hall. He paused at Matty’s door: all within was perfectly quiet; as he passed Otto’s he thought he heard a chair move, and cautious footsteps. He had his hand upon the latch

to see if he were right, but suddenly desisted, remembering another duty which he had proposed to himself.

The hall was still deserted. The night-lamp was flickering its last, the air was warm and close. Mamsell was outside in the servants' hall with her bunch of keys, and insisted upon the master's having a cup of the coffee that was just ready for the harvesters before he went to walk,—whither she would like to know, in case he should be sent for to Farmer Eggersen's wife, who, she had heard, was very ill. "Indeed, she's like to die, Herr Doctor, and Lina Carstens says the last baby is a poor, weak little thing. Eggersen is sure to come to beg you to see his wife."

"Very well, then, tell him I shall be in Fährdamm between eight and nine, Jetta, and ask Fräulein Matty to get together a bundle of linen and old clothes for the children, that he may have it when he comes." And with this the doctor set out.

The larks were singing in the meadows, and the skies arched cloudless above the earth; no finer day for harvesting could be imagined. The fields, with their luxuriant crops, stretched far away towards the horizon. In the pasture where the cows were grazing, the milkmaids were already busy with milk-pails and milking-stools, and Strom, the one-eyed Spitz dog, was barking furiously at the gate of the enclosure where the colts were kept, within

which a loud whinnying was going on. The Lübberswerder horse-dealer, Aaron Rosengzeig, had set his heart upon two of the finest chestnut colts, and he was coming at noon to-day to complete their purchase. Otto had promised to be present at the negotiation as a distinguished connoisseur.

"I will try to interest him more and more in my affairs," the doctor said to himself, rubbing his forehead, with a sigh. He paused in the middle of the bridge across the Elsum, and, as had happened before a hundred times on this very spot, the perfect beauty of the morning penetrated his very heart,—the mist on forest and stream, the graceful windings and the sparkling current of the river, with its row-boats and sailing-vessels. In the distance the Elsum church pointed upwards from its nest of greenery, and in the foreground, not far from the bridge, was the dock-yard, whence came the sound of hammers. Naturally, the skeleton of a half-finished sailing-vessel, upon which the workmen were busy, caused his thoughts to travel afar to distant climes and seas, but they soon returned gladly to these homelike scenes, finding them doubly dear.

The doctor crossed the bridge, and went straight to the search-officer's house, entering it without knocking. The morning sun illuminated the bare, comfortless room, the only object of interest in which was the antique clock with its dark inlaid

case. The room on the other side of the front door was used for official business only, and was littered with barrows, scales, stamping apparatus, etc., and on the desk in the corner stood a huge inkstand with its array of goose-quills.

Gärdes, in an old dressing-gown and buckskin breeches, was sitting at the table in the middle of his room. His little kitchen-maid was grinding his coffee and running into his bedroom from time to time to shake up his great square feather beds. The old man himself was reading the Bible, which lay open before him, moving his lips silently the while. When the doctor entered he nodded without looking up, read on for a few moments, then uttered a loud 'amen,' and turned his chair round from the table.

"Ha, Fritz, morning t'ye; you're out early. Sit down, sit down; I'll only put on my coat."

"Never mind, Hinnerk, I'll come another time for a chat; at present I am not in a very good humour with you," said the doctor, crossing his arms on the back of the willow chair opposite Gärdes, and looking fixedly at the unkempt, unshaven figure before him. "You have given me a sleepless night and a deal of trouble, Hinnerk," he went on: "you have insulted my guest, and driven him back to the very verge of the melancholy from which I have been trying for weeks to divert him—— Don't interrupt me, I must finish what I

have to say. You brag of your friendship for me and treat me like an enemy; you call yourself a Christian, and how do you act? More cruelly than an ignorant heathen. How dare you try to poison a young life with which you have nothing in the world to do? How dare you try to rob a son of his respect for his parents? Fie upon you, Hinnerk! you have done an ill turn in your old age, and I am the sufferer from your conduct."

"Thunder and lightning!"—the old man started up and his face grew scarlet,—“yesterday the young fellow was at me, and to-day you are scolding. Am I an ox that you would muzzle me——”

“When you are treading out the corn?” the doctor completed the sentence. “Yes, when such poor straw is to be threshed. Whom did you think to benefit, Hinnerk? Me, perhaps? Or did you only mean to meddle in your clumsy way with the plans of the Lord, and help to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children? Are you so without fault that you are justified in setting yourself up as a judge over others? I am not, at all events, Hinnerk; and if you do not make me a solemn promise never again to utter a word against my friends, our friendship is at an end from this moment.”

The old man stood, stubborn as ever, at the table, leaning with both fists upon the Bible. His small, light-gray eyes sparkled from beneath his bushy eyebrows like those of an angry bird.

"I've had worry enough with those cursed Liebezahls," he said. "I don't want any of them about the country here; and you do not seem to see that the young fellow is after your daughter, Fritz, and will be glad enough to hang up his hat at Eichweide."

"Is it your daughter or mine who is to be taken care of? What affair is it of yours?" asked the other, and his eyes flashed. "We are old men, you and I, and shall live to see but little of the children's future, and if they must be warned and guarded, it must be done in love, not in hatred. Hatred produces poisonous blossoms and bitter fruit. For my part, I do not deserve nor do I want the saintly halo you choose to bestow upon me. Others have suffered far more than I, and have no child to comfort their old age, as my Matty does mine. Where God thinks it just to punish, be sure he does so without our assistance. You'd better keep your clumsy hand out of the business."

"There's no harm in the lad if it were not for his father and mother," growled Gärdes.

"His father and mother are nearly forty years older, and have been sorely tried," said the other. "Three of their children they have seen vanish in the grave, and any wrong they did me has been atoned twice over, and repented of more than enough. I was to blame as well as they. But enough; that is neither here nor there. Promise



me, and give me your hand upon it, that at sixty-three you will put away all exercise of childish malice and draw a line through the past."

"Just as you choose; 'tis all the same to me. I don't want to talk about it, but I shall think what I choose. A fellow's mouth will be stopped soon enough with earth, and small loss to any one," the old man muttered; and then he gave his hand with some hesitation to the doctor. The Bible lay between them, and Edzard silently pointed to it.

The maid brought in the coffee, and the old man fetched a bowl from the cupboard.

"Sit down, Fritz, and drink a bowl of coffee with me; sit down. Don't do me such an ill turn as to run away with an empty stomach."

The doctor drank a bowl of coffee and ate a piece of bread and butter, although with small appetite. He inquired, as if nothing had happened, after Hinnerk's gout, and promised him a rabbit-skin to wrap his foot in. The search-officer had a rooted aversion to all kinds of drugs. As, soon afterward, the doctor was leaving the house, he turned to say, "You have given me your word, Hinnerk; if you do not keep it to the very letter, you must look out for another physician."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### MATTY'S ADVENTURE.

WHEN Matty at the usual early hour came to breakfast in the hall, her father had not yet returned. Jetta, who was in a very melting mood, told of the illness of Farmer Eggersen's wife, and that the doctor had sent for some wine for her. Ludolf was to take it; should he not take the bundle of clothes at the same time?

"No; I wish to take that myself, Jetta," the girl said, greatly distressed, for the sick woman had been a servant at Eichweide for years before her marriage. "Poor Sanna! Do you not think I might bring the little Eggersens over here? We can feed them up with meal-pudding and milk, and afterwards they can be sent over to the flower-dike among the blackberries."

"And then they will get stung among the nettles, and there'll be a grand howling," said Jetta thoughtfully, drawing her knitting-needle between her lips. "No, Fräulein, let me tell you that will never do. The little things are so wild they will be in the Herr Count's way in the garden; and then they smear their faces so with blackberry-juice."

that 'tis enough to disgust any one who cares about cleanliness and order. But tell them at Eggersen's that they need cook nothing for to-day. Lina Carstens will be there, taking care of the children, and when Ludolf takes the harvesters on the new meadow their dinner at twelve o'clock, he shall go on to Fährdamm with a kettleful of rice-milk, and some meal."

Matty agreed, and took a hurried breakfast. Then she arranged her bundle, put on her habit, and went into the court-yard. Karl was busy in the stables, whistling clearly the while, and he fairly beamed upon the young girl when she asked him to saddle Bess for her.

"Immediately, Fräulein Edzard; and it's a pleasure to serve you," he replied, running into Bessie's stall. "We've made a fine beginning this morning," he went on, as he led Bess out. "My Herr Lieutenant has just received his 'materials' from home,—a great package of books——"

"Oh, Karl, has he, really?" Matty interposed, with a face of intense delight, beginning to stroke and pat Bess. "Did he seem pleased to have them?"

"And why should he not, Fräulein? He was pleased to death, and ordered me to put a table for him to work at under the ash-tree as soon as breakfast was over. He thought that the Fräulein would also like to write there in this beautiful weather, and then there would be no need for me to fill

another inkstand——” This last sentence Karl uttered with immense emphasis and a sly glance at Matty, as he busied himself with saddling the mare.

“Oh, what a pity I have to go to Fährdamm!” she exclaimed. “But I am really rejoiced about the ‘materials.’ There, I will mount now. Thank you, Karl. And where is my bundle? All right. Come along, Bessie!”

She trotted off, but at the gate turned in the saddle to call out, “Take one of the comfortable chairs in the hall out under the ash to your master, Karl; do you hear?”

“Certainly, Fräulein; I will attend to it all,” Karl shouted in reply; and as at the moment Jetta appeared at the entrance-door to discover whether the Fräulein had ‘not gone yet,’ the man gave her a confidential nudge and asked, “Well, Mamsell, my dear, am I right or not? Something will come of it as sure as I live.”

“Leave off your nonsense, and carry your master his hot water. He has rung twice,” Mamsell sternly replied; adding, however, as a soothing sop, “You can get the other volume of the story of the nun from my room for this evening. It ends well, thank heaven!”

“That’s fine, Jetta!” And Karl hurried off to the kitchen, where he scalded his fingers with the hot water, for his master’s bell rang for the third time, and with exceeding violence.

Matty galloped along on her spirited favourite, her young heart filled with happy thoughts. Her lovely face and sparkling eyes accorded well with the flowers by the roadside and the fresh morning breeze that played about her brow. The peasants as they passed wished her good-day and a successful ride, sometimes stopping to look after her with a smile of pleasure. The colts came to the paling of their enclosure to lay their slender heads against the upright bars and snuff the air with inflated nostrils, and then dashed off around the field with resounding hoofs.

Matty reined in Bess, and sat erect in the saddle. It seemed as if this day were to bring her a special delight. Her heart beat faster as she pictured herself sitting at the same table with Otto, working away at her manuscript, while he too wrote, with the same sunshine over both—and within both? Involuntarily she shook the bridle in her hand, and Bess galloped on afresh.

The trees on the roadside flew past; the mare's hoofs thundered over the white bridge. There was a short pause at the search-officer's that Gärdes might inspect the bundle, Matty preserving a displeased silence the while, and then Fährdamm was soon reached. Cakes were purchased at the baker's, and Bessie carefully picked her way along the rough, uneven road to Farmer Eggersen's pretty cottage, before which all the five children, much depressed,

were sitting together on a bench, while Lina Carstens admonished them to be quiet and good.

Matty alighted. Eggersen, who was busy in his little garden, took her horse; its rider divided her cakes among the small assemblage, and told Lina Carstens about the dinner. She was glad when her father, who had seen her from the window, came to the door to speak to her.

"Sanna is better this morning, my darling," he said, kissing her. "I shall be with you at dinner. Do take good care of that poor little crowd out there. Ludolf will bring their dinner? That's right; and give him a flask of the old Rüdeshheimer and a dozen eggs for Sanna. God bless you! Leave that prescription at the apothecary's, and let Christian see Aaron Rosenzweig—— No, stay, I will give you a word for Otto."

Then he wrote upon a card, "Will you, my dear Otto, have the kindness to represent me and to go with Christian Siemers, or your Karl, and the horse-dealer to inspect the colts? You have full authority to conclude the sale as seems to you just and fair."

Matty stuck the card in the breast-pocket of her habit, and rode directly through the woods to Elsum to deliver the prescription. On her way home, the beauty of the direct way along the bank of the Elsum induced her to take it, and just where the narrow pathway branched off to the Moorland Inn

she reined in her horse and peeped between the 'knotted knees' of the old willows, with their bushy crowns of green, to where the Inn stood. The smoke was curling above the steep thatched roof; the cackling of hens and the melancholy low of a cow were the only sounds to break the silence that reigned beneath the warm sunshine. Matty had often heard of the thievish night-birds that were wont to lodge there,—on some nights there were bloody conflicts between them and the search officers,—but nevertheless the Moorland Inn had a strange fascination for the girl. Not far from the tavern there was a magnificent hedge bordering a fine ditch, and since two friends of her father's, who had once visited him,—two great sportsmen,—had declared that no lady could leap that hedge, she had always intended to inspire those two old men, who had treated her like a school-girl, with a proper degree of respect for her.

"Well, Bessie, my pet, are you in a good humour to-day?" And she leaned forward, patted the mare's neck, and showed her a piece of sugar. "Come, houp-là, Bessie!" The mare stood as if rooted to the spot, champing the bit so that the froth fell from it; then she tossed her head back and forth, inflating her nostrils.

"Bessie, houp-là!" Mattie repeated, touching the stubborn animal with her riding-whip. Bessie snorted wickedly, and began to sidle and caper in

a most unsatisfactory manner. For the third time her mistress urged her; then she flew like an arrow shot from the bow along the path between the willows, but stopped short at the hedge and refused the leap, planting her forefeet firmly on the ground and lashing her flanks with her long tail.

"But you shall!" exclaimed Matty, whose face was crimson with vexation and determination; and at this moment a stalwart gypsy tinker came out of the Inn, and stood looking on at the exciting struggle.

Once more the girl urged the irritated animal to leap. It reared, when suddenly the tinker's pots and pans rattled furiously. A blinding flash of sunlight, reflected from the tin cover of one of these, flamed full in the horse's eyes; it shied as it reared, came down on its forefeet, and then, dazzled and terrified, made a desperate leap. The rash rider suddenly lay on the hard bank, the blood flowing from her forehead over her cheeks, and her scream as she fell aroused a bustle in the silent tavern. Two disreputable-looking figures hurried out of the house to where Matty lay. Bess rushed across the meadow to the dike and then returned, so that the tinker caught her by the bridle. With a leap he was upon her back, leaving his wares in the ditch, where they were concealed among the bushes. He wound the bridle about his hands, pressed his knees against the mare's sides, and let her go



whither she would. The gypsy was quite sure that she would take him to where he should be richly rewarded. Bessie rebelled with all her might, but the stalwart knees held her silken sides as in a vice, and she started for Eichweide.

Otto had appeared at the breakfast-table immediately after Matty's departure, and had been much disappointed to find only Mamsell Jetta in the hall. Her face was tied up, and she seemed very much depressed. He put aside the package of books and a letter to Matty from his mother, and repulsed more roughly than was his wont the advances of the doctor's stag-hound.

"I'm sure I hope our Fräulein is not to have another accident to-day with that horse, Herr Count. I feel as if something dreadful were surely going to happen," Mamsell said, pouring out the tea and gazing into the cup as she did so with a sentimentally tragic air, as if she were depositing in a funeral urn the mortal remains of her nearest and dearest. "Any one who only sees our Fräulein's girlish ways and the innocent look in her blue eyes, can have no idea of how determined she is. And the master never can find fault with anything she does. 'Tis always so with a motherless child. Our Fräulein would be a great deal better if she had a good scolding now and then from the master for her foolish tricks with her horse."

"Where has she gone?"

"To Fährdamm, to the master, to take Sanna Eggensen some clothes and linen. But I'll wager ten thalers that she'll come back by the Moorland Inn and tease her mare to take that wretched leap over the hedge there."

"Do not croak after so melancholy a fashion, Mamsell," said Otto cheerfully, and he arose and carried his cup of tea out under the ash, where Karl had arranged a table for him with books, papers, and writing-materials, not forgetting the comfortable arm-chair from the hall. He read his letters from his parents over again, and put into his coat-pocket the enclosure addressed in his mother's handwriting to 'Fräulein Mattea Edzard.' Then he began to examine his books and papers with great interest, and to look through the last chapter of his manuscript. It seemed quite new to him, and like the work of a tyro, which was now subjected to the critical acumen of a man of ripened judgment. His former self seemed to have vanished. His pulse did 'more temperately keep time,' the fire of his emotions burned with a steadier flame,—not flickeringly, like the light of a will-o'-the-wisp; his views of life no longer culminated exclusively in an individual aristocratic self-consciousness. A mist had vanished from before his eyes; he had had clear glimpses of a blessed sphere of unselfish benevolence, of lofty aims, and con-

stant effort to attain them. He had become familiar with a genuine unpretending nobility which depends not upon a name, but upon the stainless vindication of a name.

His riches had been poverty, his wisdom folly. To-day, for the first time, he comprehended, in comparing then and now, what he had lacked at home, how he had failed in strength of will and insight, to what phantoms and trifles he had given his heart. Like one to whom a sudden revelation has been made, he looked abroad into the green peaceful world of the garden before him, and then through the written sheets lying upon the table. All at once an invisible hand, soft and warm, seemed to be laid upon his own, and a girlish voice seemed to say, "How could you criticise my work so mercilessly? Is not your own just as partial, although it contains more learned words, more exact dates?"

He set to work to read his first chapter critically, and to rewrite it from the beginning. He made notes on the margin with an eager enjoyment of his task. His mother, in her letter, had begged him not to over-exert himself; "an unnecessary warning," he thought. "I can be idle no longer; my old life is done with. I will go home in the late autumn, and then I must travel and find some place in the world where I can make my home anew."

He suddenly paused in his thoughts and leaned

back in his chair ; the idea of a restless wandering from place to place in cars and on steamers made him shudder ; one thing only seemed to him desirable,—repose. His hand idly played with a spray of the ivy, clothing the trunk of the ash beside him, and he gazed at its dark, shining leaves with what was almost tenderness. “There is rest here for me, and hope. I cannot think of leaving here,” he said, leaning his head against the mass of green. Again he considered whether he should not persuade his father to purchase *Liebezah!* and let him undertake its management ; but the pain that such an arrangement would undoubtedly cause his mother occurred to him too vividly. With a shake of his head he turned to his work again, and kept at it steadily until the sun was sufficiently high to interfere with his comfort. He gathered up his papers and was about to retire to the ancestral room, when he saw *Matty's Bess*, ridden by a very strange horseman, galloping across the meadow towards the garden.

“Hallo! what is that?” he called, tossing his books down on the table again, and in an instant he had gone to the stables to summon *Karl* and *Christian*. They did not come immediately, and so *Otto* placed himself in the way of the frightened steed that leaped the moat, behind the stables, and rushed blindly into the court-yard. Fortunately, he was able to seize the bridle ; *Bess* reared and snorted,

with eyes distended by terror, while the foam fell in flakes from her bit, and she trembled all over. But Otto's practised hand controlled the fine, nervous creature, and Christian and Karl soon came running to help. The gypsy slipped off, and Otto resigned Bess to the care of the two men.

"You, fellow, will give an account of yourself, and that on the instant," Otto said to the gypsy. And when the man began a flowery speech in broken German, he was cut short by, "Speak quickly and to the point! Where is the lady?"

"Fallen off, on hard stone. She cried a big scream, and they picked her up and carried her into the tavern."

"Into the Moorland Inn? Good heavens!" exclaimed Otto, stamping his foot, as the gypsy, grinning, nodded, and then held out one hand, and with the other took off his hat and bowed to the ground. "Not a penny shall you have until you have shown me the shortest way to your cursed tavern," Otto said, and beckoned to Karl. "Saddle my horse instantly, and then clear away those things under the ash. Christian, help me to do what is necessary. Fräulein Matty is at the Moorland Inn; she must have hurt herself, according to this fellow's gibberish. Where can the doctor be found?"

"At Farmer Eggersen's in Fährdamm," Christian replied, dropping, in his dismay, the wisp of straw with which he was rubbing Bess down. "*Our*

Fräulein at the Inn? *Our* Fräulein? Thunder and lightning! I must go to Elsum with the carriage, and you, Herr Lieutenant, will go to Fährdamm with the dog-cart and get the doctor."

"It will be better just the other way, Christian," Otto called from the harness-room, where he was looking for a whip. "I know nothing of Fährdamm, and neither does that fellow out there, I suppose. You go for the doctor in the carriage, and the gypsy will show me the nearest way to the Moorland Inn for a consideration. Those fellows know all about getting quickly across country, and the doctor will come in the carriage directly to his daughter."

So it was arranged. The gypsy ran beside Otto's horse as quickly as his roughly-shod feet would let him, and crouched low when he came near the custom-house at the bridge. There a path branched off through the fields to the Elsum dike. Otto forced his chestnut up the steep but low eminence of the dike, and then pushed on among the willows to the tavern. It was a miserably ruinous and dirty inn. Bones and ill-smelling remains of cooked vegetables lay about the yard, and attracted swarms of flies, the broken panes in the windows were mended with newspaper, and the scaling whitewash of the walls was stained and spotted by dust and rain.

Otto alighted; his horse nearly lost its footing on the slippery stones of the yard. He looked distrust-

fully at the slouching, squinting hostler who came to take his horse, and declined his services. "Stay here and hold my horse," he said to the gypsy tinker, who had just collected his utensils and various tin articles from the ditch, and was counting them over. "See that no one touches him, and that not a drop of that filthy water is given him. Remember what I have promised you."

Then, swinging his riding-whip, he went into the house. On the hearth a fire made of green twigs and damp peat was smoking, and in the midst of it hung a black kettle. The heavy smoke mingled in the heated air with the fumes of brandy. Two stalwart rogues were drinking and playing pitch-penny near the window, and looked up insolently at the aristocratic stranger.

"Where is the hostess?" Otto asked.

"She's in there," one of the fellows made reply, pointing to a door. "There's a cursed row made about some fine lady that's had a fall, while a poor man waits in vain for the food he has paid for. Hallo! Mother Timm, you're wanted."

"The whole of the devil's mess is running over into the fire. Stir it, you Breslau fellow!" the other shouted, thrusting his crooked stick into the kettle and moving it backwards and forwards, as its contents hissed upon the burning peat.

Otto gave a loud knock at the designated door, and the hostess, a dark cotton nightcap upon her

uncombed locks, opened it a little. "Be quiet, you noisy scoundrels!" she called through the crack of the door, against which she placed her broad foot. "I'll teach you to make all this racket!"

"Oh, please, please, Frau Timm, do not for heaven's sake let any one come in!" Matty's voice, much weaker than usual, was heard to say from within. "Please stay with me, Frau Timm!"

But when a familiar voice rejoined, "It is I, Matty; may I come in?" there was no reply save a half-smothered cry of delight, and in an instant the new-comer was seated beside the bed where the girl was lying, and her bandaged head was pillowed upon his arm. The hostess stood by, quite speechless from sheer terror and respect, and Matty, in the sudden relief of knowing that she was safe and cared for, could not utter a single word.

"Matty, child,—naughty girl, what have you been doing?" he said, and involuntarily he clasped her close. "You might have been killed. How could you ride so imprudently, so foolishly? No, be calm, be quiet; I will not scold you any more, my little friend," he interrupted himself, for she was crying and sobbing in the most broken-hearted way. "Thank God you have got off so easily. Your father will soon be here, and Christian with the carriage. Now let me see your wound; I will not hurt you."

She shrank as he carefully loosened the bloody



cloth that was wrapped round her head. Just above the temple there was a deep cut, but the curls matted about it prevented any examination of it.

"Good heavens! my child, has this woman not even washed the wound?" Otto asked, in dismay. "It must not be left thus a moment longer. I will try my skill——"

"The water was so dirty and the cloth so rough," Matty whispered, and her whisper sounded to her as if it came from an immense distance. She gazed fixedly into the dark, compassionate eyes above her, and suddenly seemed sinking into a measureless abyss. "I'm falling!" she stammered, in a faint voice. Otto opened the window, sent the woman for fresh water from the brook, and thanked God when she returned and Matty's attack of faintness was over.

"Now be quiet and sensible," he said, as he tore his handkerchief in halves. With one he washed out the wound, and with the other he bandaged it, sending the woman out to the brook again to wash Matty's bloody handkerchief. "Are you not a little more comfortable now?" he asked, looking anxiously at the pale face, and drawing the trembling, shivering little figure closer to him.

But she had quite lost her self-control for the time. "Oh, heavens, I am utterly wretched! I care nothing—nothing more at all for life! I know

just how you feel now," she moaned, and the tears came fast.

"Hush, hush, Matty, my child," he said, in a low tone, stroking her cold hand. "Do not compare yourself with me. You are wretched with pain and loss of blood; you will feel very differently when your father comes. Shall you not?"

She nodded, and lay quiet for a while with closed eyes, her hand still in his. "My foot pains me so, and—— Where is my Bess?" she asked, suddenly.

"At home in her stall, perfectly uninjured. Have you hurt your foot, then?"

"Good gracious, but it's swollen dreadful!" Frau Timm, who had just re-entered, declared. "We got off the boot, my Rieka and I, but the Fräulein 'most fainted, and we had to cut down the stocking."

Otto saw how the poor little thing was suffering; he looked at his watch and said, "It is just twelve. Your father will be here in a few moments. We had better leave the foot to him, do you not think so? I am a miserable bungler. It cannot be broken?"

"Oh, no indeed, not broken, but sprained or bruised, I can't tell which. And, oh, Herr Count, I have just remembered my father's message for you," she said, feeling in the breast-pocket of her habit for the card. "Here, read it, and please, please ride back and see after the colts. Frau Timm

will take care of me here, and send somebody to Fährdamm to make sure. Will you not, Frau Timm? My father will pay you well."

"Let me make a beginning with this," said Otto, putting some money in the woman's hand.

"Oh, you may be sure, Herr Count, that the Fräulein shall be well taken care of," the woman replied. "I'll keep her here safe until the Herr Doctor comes; but I must give those two men their dinners, or they'll ruin everything in the next room. And then they'll be off, and the Breslauer shall tell the Herr Doctor in Fährdamm."

"No, you shall not send that vagabond; your hostler must go," Otto said peremptorily; "I'll write a note for him. Not *you*, my dear Matty; you lie perfectly still. I cannot venture," he added in English, "to give you any stimulants that can be had in this den; can you bear it all for a quarter of an hour?"

She nodded and held out her hand in farewell. She could not bear to see him turn and leave the room so quickly. Immediately afterward she heard him ride away. In the kitchen, Frau Timm was wrangling with the men about her pay. Scoldings and abuse gathered in volume like a muddy stream in March, until they threatened to transcend what the law concedes to angry disputants. At last the two vagabonds left the house, tapping the glass with their sticks, and bursting into hoarse laughter as they slouched past Matty's window. Indeed, the Bres-

lauer mounted on the sill outside, as if he were about to force his way in. But he contented himself with frightening the poor child, and walked off with his companion. Then there was a great rattling of the tinker's pots and pans as he exchanged his five-mark piece for small coins, and finally Frau Timm made her appearance, knitting a huge stocking, to take Otto's place by the bed of the sufferer.

The girl wearily turned her face to the wall. Then, for the first time, her eye fell upon a sealed envelope which Otto had secretly laid upon the coarse woollen coverlet before he left. It was the Countess's letter. Matty opened and read it; the few lines seemed to her strangely cold, the words of a woman steeped in conventionalities and with an ever-present consciousness of her position in the world. There was not an unkind word in the note; but neither was there one that seemed to come warm from the heart; it expressed the gratitude of a mother who thinks that every human being must feel it a privilege to provide for the comfort of her idolized son. The last sentence alone called up a traitorous blush on Matty's pale cheek; it was, 'God has decreed, my dear child, that at an early age you should lose your mother. Would that it might be permitted me in this life to know you personally, you whom my husband has so taken to his heart! And should you ever need a maternal friend, remember

that there is one always ready to replace to the best of her ability what you have lost."

Matty hardly remembered afterwards how often, or with what varying emotions, she repeated to herself these words from an unknown and far-away hand. The minutes passed, and at last she forgot her sordid surroundings; she saw only the sun-beam above her bed with its myriads of glistening motes; even the throb of her physical pain seemed easier to bear. At length there was the sound of wheels on the pavement of the court-yard, and a few seconds later her father's distressed but comforting face was bending over her. One more quarter of an hour and the Eichweide coach rolled away from the Moorland Inn far more slowly and cautiously than it had approached it.

Meanwhile, Otto was zealously attending to the doctor's interests in the matter of the sale of the colts. Since Christian Siemers, after bringing the father and daughter to their home, was obliged to return instantly to Elsum on behalf of a broken harvest-wagon, Otto and Karl were the only ones to remain with Aaron Rosenzweig in the enclosure. The consciousness that he was really of use, an indispensable member of the family, had the best possible effect upon the young fellow. Eichweide, instead of a retreat where he was to regain health, had become a home to him; its joys and sorrows, its interests, great and small, lay near his heart.

There he stood in the noonday sunshine, beside the hard-headed, garrulous horse-dealer. Karl had the two colts by their halters, and was leading them up and down; the two cavalymen, master and servant, were in their element, understanding the business much better than even the experienced Christian Siemers. Otto was just about to conclude the sale, when the doctor joined him.

"You have really done me a very great favour; a thousand thanks to you," he said, shaking Otto by the hand. "That romp Matty has given me a terrible fright. Thank God she has escaped so well!"

"What was the injury to the foot?" Otto asked, putting his hand within the doctor's arm; "I could not trust myself to examine it."

"The foot looks badly enough; I would far rather have a simple fracture than such a terrible sprain with all its complications. But I hope that a week or ten days of keeping quiet will put matters almost right again. The cut in her head is quite deep, too, and the fright has upset her nerves. Meantime, we shall learn a lesson and stop riding for a while. I really have a mind simply to cause Miss Bess to vanish from the child's eyes. At present, however, Jetta is immersed in nursery cares, and is comparing you, my dear boy, to all the saints and angels in the calendar. Dream-books without end are to be consulted for your sake." He laughed in spite of

the anxious frown on his forehead. "And now, come in out of the heat; you have sacrificed yourself long enough. How is it, Aaron? have you chosen the colts?"

"The bargain is as good as concluded," the Jew replied, taking off his dirty cap. "The colts are good colts, sound and healthy, Herr Doctor. I am pleased with them. Count Kaldenhoff here thinks I ought to recommend the little one with the white stocking as a good riding-horse to one of the officers of our Lübbeswerder Light Dragoons, and that I should run the other—the big one—in harness. But the price is too high for me, and there's a rage just now for iron-gray horses."

"Oho! Nonsense, Aaron! I'll buy the little one myself, and Tettau of ours will take him off my hands in a twinkling," said Otto. "Walk him up and down over there, Karl. What do you Jews want? You can't have the colts given to you. That's a magnificent horse, doctor: fine breast and crupper, and splendid action. Not a sign of a bit, either, Aaron. Give him his head, Karl. Soh—soh—softly; trot! See how he carries himself. His hoofs are fairly winged. Just give him to a clever trainer, and in eighteen months any of your fellows will give you two thousand marks for him."

Little of a chafferer as the doctor was, he could not but be amused with the skill and plausibility

of both buyer and seller, and with Karl's rigid obedience to his master's slightest nod, while he showed off the colts to the best advantage. Not until the sale was quite concluded and Aaron had left the enclosure with Karl, to go to the servants' hall and there copy off the colts' pedigrees in his note-book and produce the pay for them from his money-belt, did Otto take the doctor's arm and go back with him into the garden.

"You ought to sell Bess to me," he said. "The horse is really not safe for a lady; it is too nervous. It would suit me exactly."

"You want it for the service?"

"For the army? Oh, no; I am thinking of resigning and leaving the country," Otto replied. "I may perhaps make the tour of Hungary, or go to Italy to stay for an indefinite time."

"Ah, indeed! I thought that plan had been given up as chimerical," the doctor rejoined. "What can you want of horses of your own in travelling from place to place? That idea seems quite irrational."

"I forgot that when I spoke," Otto said, with some hesitation. "It is a pity; Bess would cut a very brilliant figure in the cavalry. We'll talk the matter over some other time, Herr Doctor; my leave is not out for six weeks yet."

"If you like, you can end it sooner, Otto," was the reply. "I can dismiss you as a thoroughly



sound man with a good conscience, sorry as I shall be to part with you."

Otto paused and gazed into the other's eyes as if he scarcely understood. Then he said suddenly, and the charming smile that had won so many hearts played about his lips, "Keep me here a little longer, I am so fond of Eichweide, and now I could not even bid Matty farewell as I should."

## CHAPTER XV.

### AN OLD FRIEND.

THE week or ten days of which the doctor had spoken stretched out into four weeks, during which time Matty was obliged first to keep her bed, then to lie on the lounge in her own room, and then to be confined to the large arm-chair in the library, with her sprained ankle supported by a foot-rest.

The house seemed strangely quiet and deserted without her; the clear, laughing voice that was wont to resound through hall and pantry, courtyard and garden, was hushed. Mamsell Jetta tripped about with redoubled energy, and was unwearied in preparing delicacies and surprises for her too venturesome Fräulein. Matty herself, with the wound on her white forehead still visible beneath her curls, and her ankle bandaged, sat busied with her embroidery, or with her family Chronicle. Her father had discovered her at her writing on one occasion, and although she had been used hitherto to take the greatest delight in childish surprises at Christmas and on his birthday, she seemed now quite indifferent to this betrayal of her secret. For, she declared, continual occupation for her mind was

a positive necessity for her during these idle days, and since she had been so foolhardy and silly as to deprive herself, by her own act, of the pleasure of riding Bess, she was determined to apply herself more closely to the art of riding another and nobler Pegasus.

She made her little jest with smiling lips, and then read aloud to her father a queer old letter in very imperfect German, with an account of the foreign lands in which the writer was travelling. Meanwhile, he stood opposite, putting a guard upon his lips and eyes, lest they should betray anxious inquiry, for this girl who was reading to him was not his Matty.

Not that she had lost herself in fruitless repining. She was young and strong of will, and there was no danger that any suffering which she might now be conscious of would strike root within her. Her illness had made her paler and slightly thinner; a novel tenderness of expression made her youthful features lovelier than ever; her eyes shone with a more eloquent light, and sometimes there was a slight contraction of the brow as she gazed absently abroad through the open window on the 'happy autumn fields.'

"A child so short a while ago,—  
That child she is no more, ah no!"

thought the doctor, and he left his darling alone as

little as possible. She avoided all reference to herself in their talks, and was always bright and cheerful. When she was by herself she read and re-read the Countess's letter until she knew it by heart, attaching a meaning to it of which the writer had hardly dreamed; and when the twilight came on, Otto's eyes, as she had seen them above her when she lay on the bed in the wretched inn, rose upon her mental vision like two stars.

For two weeks she saw really nothing of him. "The Herr Count sends his 'good-morning,' and wishes to know how the Fräulein is to-day." "Thank him. I am getting on very well." This was the interesting intercourse carried on between them through the medium of Jetta. Then one morning Karl knocked at the door and asked if the Herr Lieutenant could see her, and meanwhile he had sent the Fräulein some flowers. And through the half-open door the man's delighted face looked in, his flaxen hair more flaxen, Matty thought, than ever, and his moustache carefully turned up, while in his large hand he held an enchanting bouquet of roses,—of course tied with a broad ribbon,—and all wired, poor things! But what young fellow knew any better? Matty buried her face among the delicious buds, and sent the Herr Count a thousand thanks, and if her father permitted it she should be very glad to see the Herr Count.

"If he has not sent an express to Berlin for that

bouquet my name is not Jetta Lemmelmann," Mamsell exclaimed, with enthusiasm. "All the finest roses; and only look! as sure as I live, a beautiful sprig of myrtle in the centre! Ah! you needn't be ashamed of your blushes, Fräulein. We'll plant the myrtle in good rich earth, and put a beer-glass over it; it will surely grow. It is the large-leaved blossoming kind, you see; real bridal-wreath myrtle——"

"I should be old and gray before it blossomed," Matty declared, laughing. "No, my flowers shall stay as they are, and when they are faded I'll keep them still."

"But you might give me the wire, Fräulein; it would wire the corks of my raspberry vinegar bottles beautifully. No need to litter up your drawers with faded flowers; one rose pressed between the leaves of your prayer-book is far more sensible and quite enough as a remembrance."

"It is my bouquet, and I do not mean to give any one a leaf or a single piece of wire," Matty declared, and Mamsell was obliged to be content.

That afternoon Otto drank his cup of coffee with the doctor and his patient up-stairs in her little study, staying with them for an hour afterwards, and declaring to himself that for such thanks as Matty's he would write the next day to Erfurt and order a whole basket of roses for her. Upon second thoughts, however, he did not carry out this

intention, but contented himself with bringing home to his little friend from his walks the last forget-me-nots and the first autumn crocuses. She gradually collected an herbarium, sentimentally precious rather than scientifically valuable, and it is to be feared that she would have preferred studying the language of flowers rather than their botanical features.

Otto, however, by no means occupied his time sentimentally; he enjoyed to the full his return to health, making long expeditions with his gun, shooting ducks or partridges, undertaking to train Bess, and working away at his historical essay, the second part of which was already in the hands of a Berlin publisher. At last the great day arrived when Matty was allowed to go down-stairs to the ancestral room, leaning upon her father's stoutest cane and Otto's arm, for the young man had made a special request to be permitted to perform this service for his little friend. The doctor had been sent for from town to a consultation, and had only time to see his child comfortably settled in a large arm-chair before hurrying off to the railway-station. Otto had had some idea of going shooting, but he changed his mind, declared his intention of staying at home, and begged Matty to allow him to share the ancestral room with her, offering to review the additional pages of her 'Family Chronicle' which she had written during her enforced seclusion.

Thus, after an interlude of many days, they sat opposite each other at the old oaken table. The September sun shone through the stained glass of the casement full upon the wreath of asters which Jetta had had made and hung above the door-way in honor of the Fräulein's reappearance in the ancestral room. Her second surprise consisted in delicious chocolate in the oldest china cups, with some wonderful cakes, served by Karl in full livery. Otto's cheerfulness became gayety outright. He sang, 'The days, the days when I was young,' and the two enjoyed the treat like merry children. Matty looked once more like her old rosy, happy self. A soft golden curl entirely hid the scar of the wound in her forehead.

Otto was in a very laudatory mood,—not at all critical. "How enormously industrious you have been!" he exclaimed. "There is really nothing for me to do except, perhaps, to give you a little help about the dates."

"And all the '48 times and troubles,—for those I depend upon you," she rejoined. "In such a chaos of politics and passions a girl naturally loses her head and wants help. It certainly is delightful to write history in partnership; and you really think, Herr Count, really and truly, that I have made good use of my quarantine?"

"Really and truly! But, my dearest child, why in the world do you always call me Herr Count?"

How can I venture to call you *Matty* unless you give me an equivalent?" he replied, shaking his head in disapproval of her formality.

She smiled. "And who gave you leave to call me *Matty*?" she asked in her turn. "It certainly was not I. You took it upon yourself, without sufficient grounds for so doing, to consider me a child, and from the first I have endeavoured to convince you of your error; I shall assuredly desist from no formality that——"

"This is outrageous. Your father would laugh in my face if I should say *Fräulein Edzard*!" he interrupted her, springing up and going round to her sofa. "Is this the way you treat me after having had three weeks in which to reflect that unless I had promptly appeared at the *Moorland Inn* you would in all probability have been robbed, and have died of fright? Consent to my request, you ungrateful girl,—I require some thanks from you. You will please to understand that I am eleven years your senior, and as your teacher and companion I refuse emphatically to be called '*Herr Count*.' My name is *Otto*."

"Eleven years older than I? Perhaps, then, in time my respect for you may allow of my calling you '*Uncle Otto*,'" she replied very gravely, dipped her pen in the ink and went on writing, her head bent above the table, without looking up at him. He leaned over her, and tried in vain to get a



glimpse through the veil of golden hair of his pupil's face. That it was bathed in blushes he felt convinced, even without seeing the small crimson ear among the curls. She hastily wrote a couple of lines, then paused, and drew her pen through the entire sentence, which certainly was rather faulty in construction. Otto took the pen from her, rewrote the sentence correctly, and then, without a word, went back to his seat.

"There! Now you are angry with me!" she said, after true feminine fashion, refusing to allow the smallest disagreement to be passed over in peace without an explanation. "What have I done?"

"Nothing at all. I am not in the least angry, Fräulein Edzard," he hastened to assure her. "I was guilty of a *faux pas*, and as my punishment you assign to me the part of an uncle, for which I certainly have no desire. Now we are quits; but—Matty—— I am incorrigible, for, upon my soul, I cannot go on calling you Fräulein Edzard."

"It is not at all necessary that you should," she said, with a look of calm dignity that Otto could hardly have believed possible for those childlike eyes, "since my father has allowed you to call me Matty. But be sure he would be quite unwilling that I should take a like liberty with your first name." She offered him her hand across the table; he took it and held it fast, and the proud look in

her eyes grew sad and tender, as she added, "Therefore let me pray you to allow all to be as it has been between us hitherto."

"No, Matty, that cannot be!" The words rose to his lips, he himself hardly knew how. And who knows what might have ensued here in the ancestral room if, just at this critical moment, when Otto for the second time in half an hour found himself beside Matty's sofa, Karl had not appeared at the door, erect as a grenadier, his hands at the prescribed seam of his trousers, his face beaming with delight? "The Herr Lieutenant will excuse my interrupting him."

"What is it? Who taught you to enter a room without knocking? What do you mean?"

"The Herr Lieutenant will please to excuse me; but—— The Herr Lieutenant von Quitzov is in the hall, and wishes to see you——"

"Quitzov? Quitzov? Are you mad, fellow?"

In an instant Otto had rushed out of the room,—quarrel, reconciliation, declaration of love, and even Matty herself, all forgotten. Through the crack of the door she saw and heard the meeting. Her black-eyed hero welcomed with enthusiasm a blue-eyed comrade as tall and erect as himself. They shook hands as if each were determined to deprive the other of an arm, and there was an eager interchange of 'My dearest old fellow,' 'Dear old boy,' and so on.

"Quitsov, of all people in the world, you are the most welcome. How upon earth did you get here?"

"Why, from the railway-station, of course, *per pedes apostulorum*. I was on my way to Lubowitz, by way of Berlin, and I ought to be there now, but that terrible Etta Lossnitz is staying with my mother, and I have run away like a coward. I'll tell you all about that by and by. Now let me take a look at you, Otto, old boy. Magnificent,—you look positively magnificent, and I don't regret my escapade from Berlin in the least. Tell me, can you give me this afternoon?"

"Can I, old fellow? We are our own master, and are here only for our good pleasure. A thousand welcomes to you. And now—excuse me one moment."

"Matty, may I bring him in; he is my dearest friend?" he said, with a face of delight, standing on the threshold of the ancestral room; and, without waiting for her consent, he led Heinz Quitsov into the room and up to her sofa.

The honest fellow was quite enraptured with all that he saw. The ancestral room, filled with the glory of the autumn sunshine, the portraits, the heraldic devices, the antique furniture, each piece most richly and artistically carved, were an immense surprise to him. Why, it was really 'feudal' here. He would have liked to transport

upon the spot to his own Lubowitz home the blue Delft jars filled with flowers, the priceless Dutch tea-service, the antique glass on the shelves of the cupboard. And in front of the centre window, framed in by ivy and oaken boughs, stood the youthful mistress of the mansion, blushing because of her helplessness, as she rested both hands upon the table before her. For but one moment, however, for Otto insisted upon her immediately taking her place upon her sofa again. She must still be very careful of her foot.

The momentous adventure in the Moorland Inn was of course gone over in detail, Herr von Quitzov stroking his fair moustache the while, with many an expression of unfeigned sympathy and compassion, and now and then stealing a glance at an opposite mirror to make sure, for his own satisfaction, of the faultless tie of his cravat and that his hair was still perfectly smooth. Otto, since the doctor was not to return until towards six o'clock, gladly took upon himself the duty of his representative. His bearing was entirely free and unconstrained as he begged Matty to allow him to order some refreshment for his friend. And every time that in answer to his 'Matty' the girl held her head slightly more erect and addressed him gravely as 'Herr Count,' his eyes fairly danced with merriment, so that Matty had much ado to preserve her dignity.

“Lovers’ banter !” Quitzov thought, and he asked Matty’s permission to drink his glass of Rhine wine to her special health. “I am distressed, Fräulein Edzard,” he added, “not to have the honour of making your father’s acquaintance.”

“But, Heinz, what is your hurry? I have a thousand things to ask you!” Otto exclaimed, refilling his friend’s glass; and Matty arose and was half-way towards the door, with the help of her cane and the backs of the chairs. “There is no other train to-day that connects with the Berlin train, Herr von Quitzov,” she said. “If you leave now you will have to pass the night in the village, and surely you will not wound your friend by so doing. We really can take no refusal. My father will be vexed not to find you here when he returns and hears of your visit. I am going to order your room to be prepared for you,” she added, with her wonted self-possession, as Heinz sprang up and offered her his arm, with profuse thanks for her hospitality.

“Whither shall I conduct you, Fräulein Edzard?”

“Only through the hall to the door of the entry, if you will be so kind,” she replied, availing herself of his aid with great alacrity, as it seemed.

Otto stood motionless on the threshold of the ‘ancestral room,’ and looked after the well-assorted pair. Heinz Quitzov’s manner towards young persons of the opposite sex was one which well became

him, it was so frank and cordial. "My hopes are always blasted by my confounded 'elder brother' air," he was wont to say. "The girls think that is decidedly my rôle." Nevertheless, no one was more popular in society or more sought for as a partner at a ball than he.

Since Mamsell did not instantly make her appearance in answer to Matty's call, Heinz opened the creaking entry-door and conducted his new friend into the servants' wing.

Otto bit his lip and slightly changed colour. "That shall not happen again," he said to himself, and then shrugged his shoulders at his own annoyance.

Heinz returned immediately, having consigned Matty to Mamsell Jetta's care in the servants' hall, and overpowered his friend anew with his unfeigned delight at seeing him again, and his ecstasy over this moorland idyll and its unique charm.

"I should like to be ordered here immediately for six months by our noble Don Villers," he declared, "only, *mon bien-chéri*, I never could emulate your cool, calm demeanour in the society of that wonderful child with her golden curls and forget-me-not eyes. I am not stoic enough for that."

"Nonsense! one would suppose you were describing a wax doll!" Otto said indignantly. "My dear fellow, when a man is as ill as I was, he cares desperately little for the most beautiful creature in

the world. Moreover, I think I remember that your affections were finally engaged last spring."

"Last spring! And what of that? This is the end of September," said Quitzov, who, sitting astride one of the chairs on the veranda, was watching the rings of smoke from his cigar with intense interest. "'Love endures forever, but its object is subject to the law of change:' that's one of Lutz Buchberg's finest remarks,—sensible and cheering. Come, let us go into the garden. I must have a nearer view of those old trees. Which way? Here along the moat? As you please; it is lovely everywhere! Good heavens! one feels at ease here at once; at Lubowitz it is so confoundedly stiff and formal. And that charming Fräulein Matty ('tis very odd that she should have your mother's rather singular name) assures me, and is seconded by that queer little wisp of a housekeeper, that they can put me up here without any inconvenience, and with pleasure, and this without a word from the master of the house."

"I'll answer for *him*," Otto exclaimed, warmly. "Now let us talk of yourself. What brought you to this secluded nook of the fatherland, so entirely out of the line of ordinary travel?"

"The sincerest friendship for your estimable self," Quitzov replied. "That is, in the first place, I wanted to go to Lubowitz on short leave, and I had the honour of escorting your honoured mamma

and the Countess Buchberg to Berlin, whence the ladies took their departure for Oldenburg, where they are to stay with their mutual cousin, Von Platen. I heard in Berlin that Etta Lossnitz was hovering on the horizon of Lubowitz, therefore I acted upon a transient idea of your mother's, and here you have me."

"Then my mother has really carried out the intention she formed so long ago," Otto observed, thoughtfully. "Do you happen to know, Quitzov, whether she intends to stop here on her way home?"

"Can you doubt it?" Quitzov asked, in surprise. "I supposed, of course, that the matter had all been arranged between you by letter. Has it not, Otto?"

"No; this is the first syllable I have heard of it," Otto replied; "they are very lazy at home about writing." He forced his voice to express a tolerable degree of indifference. "I am half inclined to spare my mother the going out of her way by going home with you. Then I should settle down into the old routine quite easily. You see, my dear Heinz, I had resolved quite decidedly to leave the service, but now that I see you, and hear about the others, I have a longing for the king's uniform and the king's service so intense that I should call it a possession of the devil, did I not know that the only devil I have to dread is idleness. It fairly makes me shud-



der when I think of those long, weary weeks of doing nothing before I came here."

"Odd; there's nothing I enjoy like having nothing to do," Quitzov remarked, putting his arm in that of his friend. "But really you are learning to moralize in a way that would not disgrace Lutz Buchberg. Well, we shall drink health and long life to you once more at the club. Now ask me as quick as you can about everything you wish to know, that we may be ready for your *Æsculapius*, and the Hebe in golden curls, who the 'goblet crowns with sparkling wine.' 'Tis too delightful that I came. Such dreams as I shall have to-night!"

Otto laughed. "Just the same queer old fellow as ever! If I may be allowed the question, Was the Countess Karla Buchberg one of the party to Berlin?"

Quitzov shook his head and sighed, adding, "Terrible sell, wasn't it? But really I'm not quite sure that your little patrician is not more fascinating than Karla Buchberg. Of course I never should dream of poaching on your manor."

"Try to banish both from your mind if you are wise," Otto rejoined dryly. "Here is the enclosure; now look at that bay mare; 'regard her with intellectual appreciation,' as our captain says. English, full-blooded, my dear fellow,—Bessie, by Buccaneer out of Marigold. What do you think of her? Come along, Bess!"

"Are you thinking of buying?" Quitzov asked. Otto assented, and the friends became so absorbed in hunting and garrison talk that the doctor drove past them unobserved.

They were recalled to their surroundings by the first ringing of the court-yard bell for supper.

"Where can they be?" Matty said, a few minutes later, to Jetta, who had pushed the tea-table directly in front of her young mistress's arm-chair, and was lighting the lamp.

Jetta went to the window. "They are both at the enclosure fence, Fräulein, and are patting Bess. The new one pleases me better than our young Herr; he has such a merry eye, and that close coat with the scarlet collar sets off his light moustache so grand. Oh, Fräulein, I always did want a Schatz with a moustache. My poor Mack—God rest his soul—was as smooth-faced as an eel, but he was kind and good, and if he hadn't died he'd have grown a beard for my sake, I know."

"If he could, Jetta," Matty interposed. "After your many descriptions, I can see your poor Mack as plainly as my own face in the glass. But with a moustache? Oh, never!"

"Well, well, I hope your Schatz will have one, Fräulein," Jetta said meekly. "I dreamed only the night before last that I scratched your nose with a thistle, and for certain sure that means a kiss from a bearded man."

"That bearded man must be my father, Jetta."

"Not a bit of him; there's not a word about fathers in my dream-book, Fräulein," Jetta rejoined, with an aggrieved air. "But never mind, laugh at all that I tell you, if it so pleases you,—although I know what I know, and no one will be more rejoiced at your good luck when it comes. Then think of me, Fräulein, 'tis all I ask."

"Indeed I will, Jetta. But to-day there is no positive need, is there, for my deciding whether I prefer a dark or a light moustache? Let us do all that we can to produce a favourable impression upon Herr von Quitzov with our clotted cream and rich duck-eggs, and you show him what dainty dishes you can prepare. Is his room arranged?"

"Of course it is, Fräulein. Karl will wait upon the strange gentleman; he offered to do so. There comes the Herr Doctor; now we will have the bell rung again instantly, that he may not be kept waiting forever for his tea."

It was long since so delightful an evening had been passed in Eichweide.

Every one was in the gayest humour. Otto was his own old self, kindly merry and most entertaining; Quitzov, less clever, but very attractive in his delight at his friend's restoration to health and his gratitude for the cordial hospitality extended to himself. Matty was in her element, and chattered as merrily as a child. This fair-haired lieutenant

who knew so well how to laugh, and so appreciated Jetta's cookery, was greatly to her mind. He admired her beloved Eichweide excessively, and he was evidently quite ready to estimate her father as highly as she would have had him, while he answered her many questions about Berlin with the best grace in the world, as if it were a real pleasure to him,—“Just as if he were my cousin or my brother,” (poor Quitzov!) she said to her father when their guests had retired to their rooms. Before tea was over the young fellow had concocted a hundred schemes for skating-parties and sleighing-parties, and balls and tableaux in the club-house,—all in her honour, since she certainly would pass the coming winter with the Kaldenhoffs.

“The Countess is absolutely charming, Fräulein Edzard. Why not go back with us and stay at least until carnival time?” Heinz proposed in all seriousness, and Matty, who had not the slightest suspicion of the Countess's intended visit, grew quite giddy and confused at the temerity of this scheme. Sometimes, when not entirely absorbed in contemplation of the delights upon which Quitzov expatiated, the girl was conscious that Otto's dark eyes were fixed upon her, and looking up at him, encountered a glance that made her heart throb wildly with an utterly incomprehensible emotion.

Dr. Edzard sat leaning back comfortably in his basket-chair in unalloyed enjoyment of the results

of his treatment. Otto, who had taken a seat beside him, once or twice turned and laid his hand upon that of the old man, accompanying the action with a look of profound and affectionate gratitude. He frankly confessed to him that he now regarded his scheme for resigning a profession to which he had been so devoted as the last suggestion of his morbid melancholy, which he utterly repudiated. He could hardly understand how he had ever entertained such an idea.

"Do you remember that morning on the west veranda, after we had been grafting roses, my dear doctor? Our talk, as we sat there for half an hour to get cool, quite cured me," Otto said in an undertone, while Quitzov and Matty were engaged in eager conversation.

"Not our talk, but the force of will, the appreciation of life which then stirred within you, effected your cure," the physician replied in the same low tone, as he raised his glass. "I drink to you, my boy. You speedily made my task very easy and pleasant for me, and I rejoice in the knowledge that the Kaldenhoffs and the Edzards are once more as faithfully and truly united as of yore. Remember this, my dear fellow, when you are again in your own home."

"Yes," Quitzov interposed. "*A propos*, are you really going back with me to-morrow, or the day after to-morrow, if you, Herr Doctor, are kind

enough not to send me, your unbidden guest, away before then?"

"To-morrow, or the day after? That seems quite too soon for me," said Otto; "and, besides, I should like to wait to hear from my mother regarding her plans. Quitzov says, Herr Doctor, that she told him she was very desirous of seeing me here," he added, turning to the physician, and controlling his voice with some difficulty.

"Yes," Quitzov declared, "the Countess, whom I had the honour of escorting as far as Berlin, permitted me to mention this desire of hers. Am I right, Otto, in thinking from what your mother said that her home in her youth was in this part of the country, and that she has associations with Eichweide in especial?"

"Quite right, Herr von Quitzov," the doctor answered in Otto's stead, and his grave, gentle glance soothed the young man's apprehension with regard to his mother's wish, by which he had been at first most painfully affected. "Many years ago she was young and happy here, and it would sincerely gratify me to see her after all this time happy again in old Eichweide. Write and tell her so, Otto, my dear boy, or would you rather that I should write?"

"If it is not too much to ask, I beg you to do so," Otto replied. And Heinz Quitzov privately wondered why Otto, in this most hospitable man-

sion, should make such ado about a visit that could not but confer the greatest pleasure upon the host, for was not the Countess the very ideal of a charming and estimable woman?

“You really are quite hoarse; you’d better take a little care of yourself, Otto,” he said to his friend in a tone of paternal admonition. And Otto thanked heaven that good, unsuspecting Heinz could see no difference between hoarseness and hoarseness.

## CHAPTER XVI

### DREAMY DAYS.

SUNNY autumn! How brilliantly the first days of October dawned over Eichweide! The asters and dahlias were in full bloom, mignonette and petunias overran the garden-beds. Among the snow-berries in the shrubbery of the flower-dike gleamed the crimson berries of the ash, luring the wandering fieldfare to sweet destruction.

The storks had long since taken their flight southward, followed by the merry songsters of the fields and forest, who had sailed above the old oaks in long lines, showing black against the blue sky. There still was heard at times the distant cry of some of the larger birds of passage, and instead of the butterflies, white gossamer threads floated above the flowers. But the yellowhammers and sparrows, the finches and redbreasts, still stayed. They hopped familiarly among the threshers in the warm barn, and shared the food of the doves. Crows and ravens croaked hoarsely in the topmost branches of the ash-trees, and the pretty, quarrelsome little tom-tit peeped out from among the ivy-leaves at the window of the servants' room, where before long there



would be provided a daily dainty meal for it and for its fellows. The ducks and hens were allowed to stray into the garden, and promenaded to and fro every morning beneath the windows of the hall, with feathers all a-ruffle with the chilly air, and melancholy cluckings and quackings. The weasel stole forth under cover of the nightfall upon its predatory excursions, and the mice took up their winter quarters in the hay-mow and corn-crib. The farm looked like an island, for the distant meadows were under water, and the cattle had taken possession of their open stalls on either side of the huge barn. How warm and quiet and sleepy it was there! The crunching and chewing of the ruminating cows, the low jingle of chains, and the fragrance of hay heightened the comfortable character of the place. Tiras and Diana, the setters, were never quiet; they leaped about their master, wagging their tails with joyous barks, if he so much as went near the gun-rack. They had a golden time of it this year. Otto and Quitzov made the forest and field quite unsafe. They tramped over the moorland and through the stubble after hares; the last ducks and partridges, shy and cautious as they had become, fell victims to their love of sport, and at noon the huntsmen would return home with magnificent appetites, in the highest spirits and the muddiest boots.

“Do you expect me to pluck and cook all you

bring home?" was Mamsell Jetta's constant inquiry; but Heinz Quitzov had so delightful a way with him, and understood so well how to offer the due amount of homage to Mamsell's personal charms, that she was sure to prepare the game they brought with her own skilful hands, and the three young gourmands did ample justice to her artistic capacity.

For Quitzov still made the third in the youthful party. He had written to Lubowitz that he should not pay his visit there until he had leave again in spring. For the present he thought it his duty to devote himself to his friend. Instead of going himself to his home, he sent thither his photograph taken at the Elsum yearly fair for fifty pfennigs. The shadowy female figure beside his green-clad form was the daughter of his host, a charming blonde, only, unfortunately, she had not sat quite still during the taking of the picture. Otto Kaldenhoff, whom they would probably recognize in the dark May-pole of a man in the background, was utterly insensible to the charms of this charming girl,—so Heinz ran on at length in his letter to Lubowitz. Frau von Quitzov, his mother, tried to familiarize herself with the idea of a bourgeois marriage for her first-born, and informed herself with regard to the patrician families of Northern Germany.

"Your leave stretches out infinitely, Heinz,"

said Otto, when Quitzov, at the end of a week, in answer to the doctor's and Matty's invitation, promised with great delight to stay eight days longer. "Eight weeks last spring, and four now! Three months in the year spent in idleness!"

"You need not talk; you have had almost six now," Quitzov rejoined. "Yes, yes, my boy, we are the darlings of the regiment, and could always do as we liked in Konsky's time. It behooves us to keep up the good practice. That, at least, is my view of the matter. When we put on our czapkas again we will together give a famous entertainment, with lots of champagne,—without ladies, of course,—all among ourselves; you're agreed to that, are you not?"

"I shall be," Otto replied. "My interest in the club and enjoyment of society will return to me fast enough, rely upon it, although I shall have to claim forbearance from you at first. But, to go away from here! Good heavens, how homesick I shall be!"

"So shall I," said Heinz, and he whistled Tiras to his side, stuck a monthly rose in his collar, and sent him to carry it to Matty, who had just gone to the hall-door to look at the weather in view of the apple-gathering.

They spoke ten times a day of their departure, and yet behaved as if it never could take place. The household went on as usual; the daily *menu*

was in accord with the fashion of the country-side : cabbage continually, with all kinds of autumn and winter dishes. No one made strangers of the guests, for they felt and conducted themselves like members of the household. Quitzov's presence added essentially to every one's enjoyment. Now and then, to be sure, he interfered with the usual routine, but not more than was easily pardoned in view of his five-and-twenty years.

Here, where there were no comrades to chaff him, and outshine him, the self-consciousness, which was not natural to him, and which sometimes gave an air of rusticity to his manner, dropped away from him like the chrysalis from a butterfly. His gay humour fluttered its wings merrily, and gave life every evening to the little party collected about the table in the well-lit dwelling-room next the hall. His friend's quiet demeanour provoked him to reproduce in his own person the Otto of former times, his idol and model ever since his ensign days. At times Otto, from his seat in the recess of one of the windows, would smile sadly to hear his own former songs and stories, and to see the delight which they called forth in Matty's eyes. Never in her life had she been so deliciously entertained ! Even her father grew young again, helped in the deciphering of charades, and told stories as he had not done for years. The girl thought this life positively Paradisiacal.

Otto's quiet reserve alone, although radically differing from the gloomy melancholy of the summer, sometimes sent a pang to her heart. In vain she pondered upon it; her happy temperament could not divine the conflict going on within him. How could she know that the lover was struggling in him with his sense of honour, which pointed to a grim dark obstacle in the midst of his path toward happiness? This obstacle? The past. The more perfect his recovery became, the more grave and earnest did life seem to him; the more profoundly was he conscious that his hope must be attended by fear.

"We disturb you in your reading,—we are making too much noise," Matty said to him one evening, as he sat in silence, thoughtfully turning over the leaves of a book which he had picked up from the table, while Quitzov, beside him, was showing some wonderful tricks with cards.

"Oh no, no; I like to see you so merry. Go on with your cards," he replied, with a kindly nod, and then went on reading.

For a moment she stood silent beside him, looking over his shoulder at the book. It was a treatise of a scientific character. How great a contrast to her merry mood his thoughts must present! Slowly, with a slight quiver of her lip, she went round the table to Quitzov and his cards, and whilst he was reading from them a most brilliant fortune for her,

she cast down her eyes, lest he should see that they were moist. It is true that she soon became as gay as ever; but there was a shadow over her talk and laughter, and Otto, who watched her secretly, was distressed at having unwittingly grieved her.

Before separating for the night the two stood, candle in hand, for a moment alone together at the foot of the staircase. For the first time since they had known each other Otto bowed over the little hand held out to him and pressed his lips upon it, asking, "You are not displeased with me, Matty?"

"Never!" she replied. "But I saw that you were dissatisfied with me this evening, and I could not bear it."

"Dissatisfied! On the contrary, my child, your gayety is our sunshine, and I was wishing that I knew the spell to conjure it forth. Do you know that I often wish I were Quitzov?"

"That *I* never wish!" she said. "To be merry and to be happy are two quite different things, and therefore I often venture to hope that you are not always sad when you look grave. My father and I hope so earnestly that you will take your departure from Eichweide not only perfectly well, but really—really happy."

"I hope so too. God grant it,—yes, God grant it, Matty!" he made answer, and the tone of his voice as he uttered the words and the firm pressure

of his hand agitated Matty so profoundly that in the solitude of her room she remained for a long while kneeling on the chair at the open window, gazing up motionless into the star-spangled skies, until her blood coursed more calmly in her veins and weariness drove her to rest.

When, the next morning, she heard the voice so dear to her beneath her windows discussing with Karl some commonplace subject, the previous evening seemed to her a dream; she resolutely banished all sentimental ideas from her mind, and went about her customary daily tasks with an unusual degree of interest and energy. Karl informed her after breakfast that the two young gentlemen had been off shooting at six o'clock,—before the fog had come on,—and that they had brought home a fine mess of partridges to Mamsell Jetta.

Karl, with a degree of honest pride, now felt himself to be in his right place. He polished and brushed his Herr Lieutenants so that it was a pleasure to see them; he waited on table, assisted Mamsell with zeal bordering upon affection, and devoted every spare moment to Bessie the Wayward,—now, as he had learned, his master's property. Matty had been told of the sale by her father, and had shed bitter tears over it. Otto was going away from Eichweide, and would carry with him the living memorial of the joys and sorrows of the summer. How wisely and intelligently Bess

would prick her delicate ears and look out of her bright eyes when Matty drew the beautiful head down to her and whispered to it what she would never have breathed to a human being! No other horse could ever replace Bessie, and yet she was not irritated against the purchaser, but said to the mare, the first time that she was able to go to the stable and caress her, "You happy creature, you are going with him!"

"Don't let him distress our Fräulein about the brute, or nothing will come of all our thoughts, Karl," Mamsell declared on every occasion, and 'our thoughts,' of course, bore reference to a Countess's coronet for 'our Fräulein.'

"You'll go with us, Mamsell, my dear," Karl said one day, when he was in the pantry getting an extra ration for his second breakfast, and he gave Jetta a sly pinch on the arm as he spoke.

"What put that in your head, Mounseer Impudence? I shall stay with my Herr Doctor. He'll need some Christian soul to take care of him when the Fräulein is gone away to stay with your Russians and Poles," Jetta replied, buttering with fierce energy the slice of bread for which Karl was waiting. "You ought to stay here and be coachman and hostler when that old fool Christian Siemers goes off to America next spring to dig his gold out of the sand there."

"That would be a grand thing, Jetta, but not the



thing for me," said Karl, withdrawing his hand from Jetta's virgin arm. "You see, Jetta, I shall be allowed to leave the service in the spring because of good conduct; but then, says I to myself, 'If my Herr Lieutenant marries, he'll want a coachman in livery, and I am just the fellow for that and to train the other servants, for the Herr Lieutenant is confoundedly particular.' But then a married housekeeper, like *you*, for example, and from her own home, too, would be just the very thing for the young Countess! There!" (with another attack upon Jetta's sharp elbow) "just you consider of that, Mamsell, my dear."

"My first word is my last," was the reply. "You must give in, and stay here, if, so to speak, you have any hopes of me."

"That's just what I require of you, Jettchen. Well, well, then we shall never make a match, and I dare say we shall not take it much to heart. No offence, Jettchen. We'll drop the subject for the present." With that he turned about with the greatest composure and left the pantry, taking his rations with him. Mamsell stood like Lot's wife melting in the sun. Her dream-book had foretold nothing of this kind; it was a comfort that she could wreak her first hot anger upon a ham she was cutting for the servants' table, and could gradually come to herself and admit, "After all, he is over-young for me; twenty-one will go twice into forty-two, and a

number divided by two is always unlucky; my poor Mack would have been forty-seven by this time."

She threw her apron over her head, and was about to indulge in a burst of tears as a tribute to Mack's memory, when Minna, the housemaid, appeared with the announcement that the young Herr ('the other one, Mamsell') had accidentally broken the wash-bowl in his room, and would Mamsell please give out another? Instead of this other Minna received a shower of reproaches, in which Herr von Quitzov came in for his share. Men were all alike; he and his Count might wash in the same basin until Christian Siemers had time to go to Elsum and buy another.

Her scolding made but little impression upon Minna, who was quite sure that the bowl would be immediately replaced. It served to clear the air of the pantry, however, like a thunder-storm.

Thus ended this love-passage in the pantry, and the modest halo that had encircled the brow of the deceased Mack grew to be, in Jetta's eyes, a dazzling nimbus of immense proportions.

The old manor-house began to don its winter dress; dark rugs and various skins were laid here and there in the rooms, and outside window-frames were added, between which and those always there were placed long boxes of earth planted with the

crocus and hyacinth bulbs. In the hall and the ancestral room fires burned in the large chimney-places in the morning until towards noon. The sunshine through the windows mocked the poor earthly flame, and caused it to cower ashamed among the ashes, not to be called back to life before the evening.

The doctor had many patients to visit. The damp exhalations from moorland and swamp brought colds and malarial fever in their train. Every day there was a pot of strengthening soup made ready in the kitchen for the poor patients, and Matty often accompanied her father in his walks and drives. For she was not to ride again until a fitting substitute had been found for Bess. "In the spring, my child," said the doctor. "Never again," said Matty. The sale of Bessie was the one sore subject between the father and daughter, and they avoided all allusion to it.

Authorship was at a discount. At rare intervals, before Heinz Quitzov had risen in the morning, the two historians would pore together over their yellowing documents, applying themselves to their task with such persistent diligence as would have surprised and perplexed any one skilled in reading human hearts.

The eyes of each discoursed of love eloquently enough, but yet Otto did not utter the decisive word. Was what sealed his lips reverence for the maidenly

innocence which made it seem almost a crime for him, after what he had gone through, to woo this girl? Or was it that coy reserve which was as native to the nature of her whom he loved as is the bloom to ripening fruit? The harvest-time had come; the time, too, for him to gather in. And he knew that the day could not be far distant when he could no longer resist the yearning desire which each day possessed him more fully, to pluck and keep for his own this fair fruit. But Quitzov must first be gone, for the bliss that has sprung to life in the dark shadow of sorrow, and must struggle towards the light, is a tender plant, recoiling shyly from every strange breath of air.

His friend's visit had entirely completed Otto's recovery. He was quite ready to talk of his reminiscences of the weeks of his illness, and to acknowledge where and how he had been to blame. He even wrote to his colonel requesting to have a week more added to his leave of absence, and he sent, through Lutz Buchberg, cordial messages to his comrades,—asking after the favourite horse of one, and speaking of the new command to which another had been promoted. The way was entirely smoothed for the resumption of his military duties; and when Quitzov, after a stay of two weeks, took his grateful leave of Eichweide, there mingled in the honest fellow's heart the great joy of knowing his friend and comrade once more entirely his old self, with

the slight ache due to Matty's blue eyes. Shortly before his departure there came a letter from the Countess announcing her visit on the following day, and begging Otto to be ready to accompany her on her homeward journey twenty-four hours later.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### LAST MISGIVINGS.

As Otto walked back, alone, from the railway-station, where he had bidden good-by to his light-hearted comrade, he felt strong within him the desire to be once more among his old associates and friends. He sat down on the rude bench by the New Road, and with his cane traced all-sorts of strange devices in the sand at his feet; then he looked abroad, taking in every feature of the autumnal landscape.

The north wind was whistling sharply through the waving tops of the mountain ashes, bending the boughs hither and thither, and tossing many a leaf from its stem to dance madly through the air before resting upon the earth. It whispered among the dry grasses on the borders of the ditch, as if the withered stalks were shivering and moaning. A swift hare rustled through the stubble of the wheat-field, and in the distance the bell of the Elsum church was tolling. The sun, a glowing crimson ball, was sinking into a bank of clouds just above the western hills; its splendour faded, and the skies grew darker and darker above the wide plain; not a cricket

chirped in the grass, not a bird twittered before going to rest, only a black crowd of crows cawed hoarsely on this side of the enclosure.

A wretched sensation of loneliness overpowered Otto in the autumnal twilight, which at one blow, as it were, had transformed the idyllic landscape into a cold, gray solitude. And yet he knew how his heart must always cling to this solitude, even if he might not take from it some memento, some promise of warm, fresh life in the future.

“Can I—dare I—snatch from the father his only child? Can I beg of this man, who received me beneath his roof ill in mind and body and sends me home strong and well, his dearest, fairest possession? Will he not regard my entreaty almost as an insult?”

‘Ill in mind!’ He bent his head low upon the hands which were clasped upon his cane. He had thrown his hat upon the seat beside him, and the wind played among his dark curls unheeded by him. How long he sat thus, plunged in a profound revery, he could not have told. When at last he roused himself, it had grown almost dark, and he was shivering with cold. On his right the distant light in the Eichweide hall glimmered, a pale, lonely star from among the clustering ivy, black clouds were skurrying overhead, and beyond the road, in the path across the fields, a peasant, returning home, was calling out ‘good-night’ to his

companion. There is something soothing to melancholy emotion in the sound of carelessly-spoken words like those.

“I am a fool!” Otto suddenly said aloud, raising his head, and taking up his hat preparatory to a quick walk to Eichweide. “These are all mere phantoms of my brain,—these fears. I am perfectly sound and well, and I mean to stay so; of that there’s no doubt. And if he should say ‘No,’ I will compel him to say ‘Yes.’”

It was the ‘mad Liebezahl’ in him that spoke thus, as he stood erect, and made a movement as if to snatch to his fast-beating heart something for which he longed with eager desire. “And God visit it upon me if I do not make you happy. I can, and I will, until the very end of time, my darling. They shall not come between us with any ‘but’ or ‘if.’”

Did he mean by ‘they’ his fellow-mortals or his own thoughts?

He passed his hand across his brow, waved his hand towards the spark of light among the boughs, and strode sturdily towards it.

When, after he had reached the garden, he was going round the house to get to his own room unobserved, by way of the west veranda, he lingered before the windows that had shown him the same peaceful pictures evening after evening. In the servants’ room a cheerful company was gathered



about the supper-table, with its huge tureen of soup and its plates piled with bread, while Mamsell Jetta went to and fro with one or two added hard lines about her pursed-up lips. In the harness-room Christian Siemers was polishing up the harness, for he wished to be especially fine the next day when he drove to the station for the Frau Countess. The light of his smoking oil-lamp fell directly upon the map of America, which he had nailed quite crooked upon the wall. One could even distinguish the thick lines in ink where Christian had underscored the towns which seemed to him especially attractive,—‘New Orleans, Cincinnati, New York, Chicago.’

In Otto’s room Karl was working away in his shirt-sleeves among trunks and travelling-bags, whistling like a thrush the while. It seemed an age since Otto had heard one of those charming Lithuanian folk-songs, and the fellow began to sing with more feeling than voice,—

“ Ah, my life, my love, my darling,  
Dove with eyes so clear and tender,  
Twine about me those brown tresses.  
Strangled with them, on thy bosom  
Let me die; such death were sweet.”

Otto leaned in at the open window and softly whistled a second to the melody. Karl started in dismay, and stood erect and stiff. “ Oh ! The Herr

Lieutenant will excuse me. We always sung that when we were going to Podangen, and it comes into my head because we are getting ready to march. How the summer has gone, Herr Lieutenant! and what will Madame the Countess say to-morrow?"

"Well, old fellow, how is it? Are we glad to go home? Or is half of us to be left behind with rosy-cheeked Minna?"

Karl became absorbed in the exact folding of his master's summer overcoat. "Well, for my part, Herr Lieutenant, that's a hard question to answer. I should have liked to have Minna, but how can I entice Christian's sweetheart away from him when she has promised to go to America with him? Well, then I thought Mamsell Jettchen would do, and a week or so ago I put it to her three times pretty sharply. She almost caught me then. But just in time I decided that she was but an old stick, and that after all the Herr Lieutenant would not care to have her bustling about his establishment, although she's saved up a good bit of money."

"What should I do with your wife in my bachelor quarters, Karl?" Otto asked, greatly amused. "And, besides, you will soon have served your term; so you had best consider well before you lose the chance of an advantageous match."

"If you please, Herr Lieutenant——" He paused, while Otto listened to Matty's voice singing in the

dwelling-room, and then he began again, in a tone of great discouragement: "Will not the Herr Lieutenant keep me as his footman or coachman? Suppose now, for example, that the Herr Lieutenant should marry——"

"I marry? What put that into your head?"

"Oh, what should put it into my head? I only thought so. And I should be sorry to leave the Herr Lieutenant; we have got along so well together——"

"There you are perfectly right, Karl," Otto said, laying his hand upon Karl's shoulder as the man came close to the window. "I think myself that I could hardly do without you, and if I ever marry, you shall be our factotum."

"I don't know exactly what that is, Herr Lieutenant, but I'll do my best to serve you well, whatever it is, and my duty and humble thanks to you," Karl replied. And when Otto, after giving him some directions about the packing, passed on to the west veranda, he heard the fellow go on whistling the same tune as before.

The hall was empty: only dimly lighted by the hanging lamp. The supper-table was not yet set. Twilight also reigned in the adjoining dwelling-room; the fire-light flickered fitfully; the door was ajar, and Matty was seated at the piano, singing.

Could it be called singing? It was a passionate

melodious murmur, with a rippling accompaniment from the lifeless keys,—

“The skies were lowering  
Above our meeting ;  
His love, o’erpowering,  
My bliss completing.  
Was I first thine, love ?  
Wert thou first mine, love ?  
Together there our hearts were beating.”

Ah! the girl had come to understand what she was singing. Otto, deeply moved, leaned unseen against the door-frame in the hall, and in the bliss of hearing the confession for which he thirsted from those dear lips, forgot that he was playing the part of a secret listener.

She forced her voice,—she *would* sing, and sing calmly! Her hands struck the chords of the accompaniment clearly and strongly; by the dim light the listener could see her head thrown proudly back, as if to give full, free scope to the tones that threatened to die away in tears,—

“My lover may leave me,  
It cannot grieve me,  
For mine he is while time is fleeting.”

Then came a sudden discord, and her hands were clasped before her face, her head bent low; the music-book before her fell on the floor, but before

Otto could rush to pick it up and to clasp the girl in his arms, the doctor, hitherto unperceived, arose from a dark corner, where he had been sitting, and came to the piano.

Otto saw the child take refuge in her father's arms, and then the door at which he stood was closed. Left out in the spacious, empty hall, he could only hear the calm, soothing voice which had so often cheered and quieted his own nervous unrest, and now and then a stifled sob from Matty.

And yet, in spite of the consciousness of her suffering, which touched his very soul, in spite of feeling at this moment like an exile, he could not away with a certain premonition of coming joy, for he could not but reflect that this outburst of grief from her would pave his way to her father's heart more surely than he could do it by any pleading or argument. He would not go to his room to lounge there, lost in gloomy forebodings; he called Mamsell Jetta, and begged for a light in the little summer-room between the hall and the west veranda, where he occupied himself with the newspapers, since his books were all packed up.

When Mamsell came into the hall immediately afterward to lay the cloth for supper, she was evidently startled by the stifled sounds that reached her ear from the dwelling-room, and through the open door of the summer-room she cast a tragic glance towards Otto, and then clattered her cups

and spoons indignantly. In spite of his serious mood, Otto could not but smile at these manifestations, remembering Karl's late confessions.

"Am I really to have clotted cream, Jetta, so late in the year?" he asked, looking up from his newspaper, for he felt Mamsell's eyes fixed piercingly upon him, even behind the protecting printed sheet, and they annoyed him. She stopped her clatter and came towards him.

"Indeed you are, Herr Count, and, with the blessing of heaven, not for the last time," she replied, pursing up her thin lips and looking at him with her head on one side, and an expression that would have well beseeemed the Pythian oracle on her tripod before an expectant multitude.

"'Tis borne in upon me that to-night is not by any means the last time," she went on, going again to the table and putting a large spoon in the bowl containing Otto's favourite delicacy. "I dreamed too distinctly last night of lime-twigs and forget-me-nots——"

"What is so borne in upon you is quite possible, Jetta," Otto rejoined. "I shall come here every year if it can be arranged."

"That's very good of you, Herr Count, and will please the master and our Fräulein, and me too," said Jetta. "Indeed, it's hard to lose you, and so lonely as our Fräulein is without any mother or brothers and sisters. What can an old servant

like myself do for her? And when the master closes his eyes—well, well, what is to become of her? The cards say he'll touch seventy, but what shall I do then with the *Fräulein*?"

She hid her face in her pocket-handkerchief with an audible sniff, and then busied herself with lighting the spirit-lamp beneath the tea-kettle, while Otto, without noticing her gloomy forebodings, went on reading until the hall clock struck nine and the tea-kettle began to sing. To-morrow he was firmly resolved all Mamsell's prophecies should be brought to shame. 'Lime-twigs and forget-me-nots!' What a queer old creature she was, and how soon all these surroundings would be a memory to him! In five or six days he might be at mess with his comrades.

He arose, put aside his papers, and went through the veranda-door out into the dark garden. The wind had risen,—it tossed the boughs of the oaks to and fro, and the tall hemlock before the window of the servants' room creaked and moaned. The shrubbery lay a black shapeless mass on the farther side of the lawn; the dull low of the cattle, disturbed by the howling of the wind, was heard from the barn. Otto walked to and fro for a while: the cold night air refreshed him, and he knew every path and by-way, every tree and bush in the *Eichweide* garden; the darkness was no obstacle for him.

“If I had you here in this dark garden, my darling,” he said softly, “you should not shed another tear; but you have always been the brightness of light to me. Ah, how I long to requite you for it! Patience, patience, until to-morrow!”

Thus he walked on, until she who filled his thoughts came to the door to call him to supper. In the door-way he took the hand that hung down at her side—how cold it was!—and pressed it passionately. For an instant the blue eyes were lifted to his own, their depths full of a tender melancholy,—he saw it clearly, for his own were bent so close above her that his lips nearly brushed the gleaming gold of her hair,—then she preceded him to the circle of light around the tea-table, where her father was already seated, and here she played her part as hostess with her own quiet, attentive grace.

It was a silent meal. Edzard replied in monosyllables to Otto’s questions, with now and then an anxious stolen glance at his daughter, whose efforts to maintain a connected conversation were not crowned with success. Jetta went to and fro in great discontent with the small justice done to her fare, and with an inimitable martyr-like air.

“We are rather a melancholy party to-night; ‘Parting brings woe,’” said the doctor. “To-morrow we will do our best, in your mother’s honour, to do away with melancholy. To-night we must retire early. I trust we shall not be kept awake by



the wind. See that the inside shutters are put up down here, Mamsell; and Matty, my child, sew that button on my overcoat, for we must drive early to the station to-morrow. Hark how the trees outside battle and wrestle with the wild fellow from the north," he went on, going to the glass door, and standing there with his hands clasped behind him. "I should like, for once in my life, to be at sea in a storm. Old as I am, I have no acquaintance with the sea. I cling to my native soil."

"And your soil is worth clinging to," said Otto. "It is an oasis in the world's desert, and will be so constantly my Fata Morgana, that you never will be secure from my visits, my dear doctor."

"Take care lest I take you at your word. Let me beg you, however, to allow yourself to be blown hither by a gentler wind than this rude northeaster," the doctor rejoined, smiling, and Otto said confidently,—

"Oh, the northeast wind clears the air. I predict golden sunshine to-morrow, and that Eichweide will look more homelike and enchanting than ever. And how, then, can I tear myself away from it? I should like to know *that*. I enjoin it upon you, Jetta, to dream a particularly fine dream for me to-night, and to give it me with its interpretation written out, to console me on my journey." And he looked over his shoulder at Mamsell, who was helping Minna to clear away the table. "What!

are you going to say good-night already, Matty?" he said, not waiting for Jetta's reply, as Matty, her basket of keys on her arm and candle in hand, went to her father to give him his good-night kiss. "Good-night, then, my dear Matty, and God guard you!"

Her lips quivered, her eyes were veiled, and the hand that held the candle trembled. She did not utter a word for an instant, only a pathetic little smile hovered about her mouth. Then she took courage, held out her hand to Otto with a quiet 'Good-night,' and went up the stairs to her room without once looking round.

Soon afterwards the entire household was wrapped in silence. The lights were extinguished in Jetta's and the servants' rooms, and the doctor, too, had bidden his guest good-night, and had left the hall before Otto quite appreciated that he had gone. "I am really fatigued to-night. We shall have a long drive to-morrow together, before your mother comes and absorbs you." With these words he took his departure. Did he wish to avoid any dangerous conversation? Otto sat alone pondering upon this question in a window recess of the hall, forgetting to smoke his usual cigar. He never in his life had felt so wide awake.

The light in the hanging lamp had long been extinguished, and the feeble ray from the night-lamp, that was always left burning at night on the stone

table, flickered in melancholy fashion on the tiles of the floor, and cast enormous disproportioned shadows of the stags' antlers and deer's heads vaguely upon the opposite wall.

Otto's trunks were packed and strapped in the spacious vestibule. Tiras, the setter, lay beside them upon his mat asleep, but starting up with a low growl and phosphorescent eyes at the slightest creak of Otto's boots, while outside the wind was still moaning drearily, and now and then dashing gusts of rain against the window-panes.

"I must venture it now," the young man suddenly exclaimed, and sprang up, mechanically buttoning his coat tight over his chest. He crossed the hall ejaculating (and never was prayer more fervent) "God help me!" and cautiously went up the winding, creaky staircase, directing his steps towards the tiny ray of light that shone through the keyhole of the doctor's study. Receiving no answer to his low knock, he lifted the brazen latch and entered. The tall worm-eaten writing-desk was crowded with books, but the pen lay dry beside the inkstand, the usual odour of fine Turkish tobacco was wanting on the air, and instead of the convenient student-lamp, a candle was burning on a table against the wall, while the ash-boughs were tapping outside against the window, as if begging for shelter from the fury of the blast. The master of the house, however, sat in his arm-chair, his gray head

leaning on his hands, and, all unconscious of the intruder, did not stir. In an instant Otto was beside him. "Dr. Edzard, my dear doctor, let me know, let me share your anxieties. Are they not mine, too?" he exclaimed, eagerly, making an immense effort to steady his voice. "Let me be your son; God be my witness that I will be a true son to you!"

The old man, startled suddenly, sat erect in his chair and looked into the fine dark eyes, which he had never since his boyhood been able to forget, now bent upon him in earnest entreaty. The next moment he had clasped close the hands extended to him. "My dear boy,—Otto,—thank you for coming to me just at this moment. Yes, I am weary and anxious to-night. Let us have a last talk together." And he looked into the young man's face as if to read his very soul in his eyes.

It was long after midnight; the wind had sunk to rest, and the kindly stars peeped out from among the misty clouds, when Otto left the doctor, who accompanied him to the head of the staircase. Their looks, as they bade each other good-night, were grave but happy, and the hand which Otto shook again and again had become to him the hand of a father.

His room, though there were signs of his departure everywhere about, and a general air of

emptiness prevailed in it, seemed to him transformed to a Paradise. He opened the door into the ancestral room, and lay awake for a long time gazing into the darkness. He imagined he could distinguish the pictures on the wall. He said to himself that he now belonged among them; that his face might one day look down from beside theirs upon later generations, and he resolved that their patrician device, 'Strong in fidelity,' should be his motto in the labyrinth of life.

"Here is my home!" He repeated these words to himself again and again, and he could almost fancy that he felt Matty's cool cheek laid against his own, while her dear eyes smiled, and all pain had vanished from her brow.

He gradually fell asleep, for profound emotion exhausts alike body and soul; but with the glorious sun of the next morning a new light dawned upon his life, giving promise of a full and perfect day.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### GOLDEN SUNSHINE.

"SUCH a day as this is the very crown and glory of the year," said the doctor, as he set out at an early hour to drive with Otto to the station to meet the Countess. It was, indeed, a 'bridal of the earth and sky.' The skies were a deep blue, the last flowers in the garden were dewy fresh from the rain, and through the branches of the trees, already partly stripped of their leaves, there were charming glimpses to be seen from a distance of the fine old manor-house. The gentle decline of lawn in front of it had been close shaven but the day before, to the delight of various fowls, who made it their foraging ground until Ludolf drove them off when he came to rake the paths. He ran up the flag on the old flag-staff, and the Edzard coat of arms and crest shone in the sunlight, and lorded it over the bright berries of the young juniper-trees in the garden.

Mamsell Jetta and Matty were alone in the hall, where Mamsell was finishing the knitting of a huge stocking, that she might not be idle while being company for her young mistress, who was just finishing her breakfast. Karl, sly of smile and ruddy

of cheek, was polishing the door-knobs outside, and every now and then glanced through the door at the 'little Fräulein.' "What makes her look so pale and pining?" he thought. "I'll take my oath I heard my lieutenant say 'dear father' to the Herr Doctor when he helped the old Herr on with his coat, before they drove off."

The secret was certainly not intended for his ears, but, "There's no law against hearing, and I heard it myself, I'll lay my life, Jetta." With these words Karl had imparted the extremely interesting piece of news to his friend before Matty made her appearance. The relation between the housekeeper and the man had, after ripe reflection and due deliberation, been settled as that of firm and lasting friendship.

"Our Fräulein knows nothing of it, and I'd advise you, Karl, not to know anything either," had been Mamsell's admonition. "If you should do mischief and get yourself into a scrape by wagging your tongue, you need not look to me to help you out. Love-affairs need tender handling, and our Fräulein, bless her, is the innocentest soul on God's earth! 'Tis not for us to say a word, or even look wise, until it comes to the old Countess's speaking a blessing on the pair in our best room up-stairs. Just go on polishing your knobs, and don't bring in the sand from the vestibule on your boots into my clean hall."

Karl had followed this sage advice, but he did not pay the usual attention to his work, and he regretted extremely that there were only ten, and not twenty, door-handles to be polished in the hall.

"Fräulein," said Jetta, as soon as they were alone, as she handed her a second cup of tea, "your eyes look dull to me; you must have slept poorly."

"On the contrary, too well," Matty replied, drawing the bread-tray towards her, "and Minna forgot to wake me. It is most provoking. What did my father think of my not being here to bid him good-bye? You are a dear old soul, Jetta, but you really must not go on petting and cossetting me all the time."

"Ah, child, how long shall I be able to do it?" Mamsell Jetta ejaculated, and suddenly two large tears rolled down her withered cheeks and dropped upon her snowy neckerchief. But she instantly controlled herself when she saw the surprise in her Fräulein's eyes. Really, the child's unconsciousness was touching! "No one can tell me that. You'll soon be old enough to be married, Fräulein," she went on, and going round the table, knitting in hand, she tenderly stroked her young mistress's cheek. "Indeed, I must have the joy one day of fastening your bridal dress for you, and putting on your wreath. 'Tis not for nothing that I dreamed all last night of myrtles and roses and dotted tulle!" ("God forgive me that lie!" thought the good old



woman, who, to her great vexation, had passed this critical night in perfectly dreamless repose.) "And when I laid the cards, the ace of hearts always came next to the knave of diamonds, and the queen of hearts next. And the knave of diamonds means two kinds of cloth,—that every one knows. Oh, you need not pretend that you don't know what I mean, *Fräulein*," she went on, after a pause, "and I hope you'll have better luck than I with my poor Mack."

"‘Dreams are but seems,’ Jetta, and I never took much interest in your cards," Matty said gravely. "But don't be vexed with me for that; let me do my work quietly, and in a few days all will be as it used to be. Come, we really must make haste; they will be here at half-past eleven."

"Well, no one can forbid hope, however you may disbelieve in my cards," Jetta said peevishly, and even Matty's murmured "Ah, yes, no one could live without hope," failed to restore her former sentimental mood.

She cleared away the breakfast-table, and then withdrew to the pantry, where she was shortly heard scolding the cook-maid in a sharp voice for not rolling out her dough in the right way.

Matty went into the garden to gather flowers wherewith to decorate the rooms. She looked so charming in her close-fitting plush jacket, with a blue silk kerchief tied over her curls, that Karl,

who saw her as she passed him, could not hold his tongue.

"Ah, Fräulein Edzard, it's a beautiful morning; it seems to me that it surely must be the Fräulein's birthday, for I'm wanting all the time to wish her joy and many happy returns——"

"No, my birthday comes in the winter, Karl," she replied; "and you can hardly wish me joy of the knowledge that our house will be empty tomorrow, and that you are to take my Bess away with you. Still, good wishes do no one any harm, Karl."

She went on into the garden, and half an hour afterward she returned with an armful of grasses and crimson vine wreaths, asters, roses, and fragrant mignonette. As she passed through the passage into the hall, Karl was no longer there in his working clothes, but was setting the table for lunch dressed in his livery, with knee-breeches and white cravat, and in the pantry Mamsell was arranging a dish of fruit. An animated conversation was going on through the open doors, but both servants instantly fell silent when they perceived Matty, Karl dropping a dozen of spoons in his dismay.

The girl never noticed it. She fetched glass vases and those of blue Delft from the ancestral room, filled them with the last children of the garden, and distributed them in the various rooms.

Reserving a few rosebuds and some delicate

grasses, she softly opened the tapestried door into Otto's room; it looked dreary and forsaken. A flower would certainly give it a more friendly aspect. On the threshold she paused, and her heart beat as if she were about to commit a crime. Then she filled a delicate glass with water, divided her flowers into two small bouquets, and placed one upon Otto's table, passing her hand caressingly over the exquisite buds.

"Shall I care for all and not for you?" she whispered to herself; "it is the last time,—the only time,—and you will not misunderstand me." She stooped and kissed the flowers, and a tear lay among them like a drop of dew.

The other bouquet she put upon her father's writing-desk, thus satisfying her filial conscience. A huge bunch of crimson leaves and branches of snowberry, starred over with gay asters, adorned the toilette-table in the Countess's room. Matty walked once or twice up and down the spacious chamber with its wide bed and the high-backed, red-cushioned chairs, trying in vain to fancy herself in the Countess's place when she should once more find herself among the scenes of her youth and remember her treachery of years gone by. A tender compassion for her mitigated the girl's stern condemnation of the wrong she had done. Was not this woman the mother of one most dear to her young heart, and had she not promised to be a

mother to Matty herself should she ever have need of her care? "Yes, I must love her, because she is *his* mother. God is good, and pardons all who pray to him," she thought; and in spite of her grave reflections, she looked around the room to see that all was as it should be. In a corner she observed a faded picture of her father, taken in his old student days. She hastily took it down and carried it into his study, taking from the desk there the mounted photograph of the old Count, which she put on a small table in his wife's room, covering the blank space of wall, whence she had taken her father's picture, with an illuminated confirmation-day sentence from her own room,—

"Be not afraid; only believe!"

Through the open window she now heard the distant whistle of the Elsum train. In half an hour the Countess, whom she imagined as cold, proud, and reserved as some queen, would reach Eichweide.

She hastened down-stairs, finding nothing, however, to arrange. The whole house was in festal array, ready, in Mamsell's estimation, for the reception of so distinguished a guest. And Mamsell herself was dressed in her best black silk, with a pink neck-ribbon, and a handkerchief, smelling of dried rose-leaves, stuck in the pocket of her muslin apron. At any other time Matty would have been dazzled by such splendour, to-day she hardly noticed

it. Restless and uneasy, she went from room to room. She tried to sew, but her stitches were all uneven; she tried to write in her Chronicle, but she could see nothing save Otto's bold handwriting on the margin of her pages, and the marks of interrogation which he had scattered here and there. He, always and everywhere *he*. The feeling, 'What shall I do without him?' threatened to overpower her, and to struggle against it was almost physical pain.

Thus she sat, pen in hand, turning over leaf after leaf, until she was startled by the rolling of wheels and the cracking of a whip, and Jetta stuck her head in at the door with, "They're coming, Fräulein!"

She brushed back her curls with trembling fingers, never taking time to wonder at the white face she saw in the mirror, and went to the entrance-door to await the approach of the carriage, a pathetically lovely image of welcome. The carriage turned into the court-yard; Karl opened the door, and Otto sprang out, his face beaming. Then came the doctor, who helped the Countess to alight. Matty started. Did the stranger wish to kiss her father's hand? The beautiful woman, with large brown eyes and delicate, refined features framed in soft gray hair, stood and looked about her, her clasped hands pressed against her heart. As if in a dream she noted Karl's low bow and Mamsell's

profound curtsy, and just so she put her arm around Matty, and pressed the girl's brow with lips that were icy cold. She seemed really to see only the doctor and Eichweide, the dear old home of the happiness of her youth, the home which had fulfilled her hopes and turned her despair into joy and peace.

"All, all as it used to be! It is too much; I cannot grasp such joy, I cannot thank you," she whispered in a broken voice, holding out one hand to the doctor and the other to her son. Edzard put her hand within his arm, saying, "Let us go into the house." She did as he said, but did not release her son's hand. He went with her up into her room, where he was touched by the evidences of Matty's thoughtful care.

"Let me be alone for a while," the Countess asked; and when her son left her she kneeled down in the darkest corner of the room, with Matty's motto above her head, and implored the blessing of heaven upon this house and its master, thanking God that her mourning had been turned to joy. There was even room in her heart for gratitude that the old search-officer, whom she had so dreaded, had apparently not recognized her as she drove past his house, but had bowed with quite a friendly air.

Otto stood gazing at the flowers in his room, his heart filled with a joy of which he had never

dreamed. At last, at last his hour had come! He knew where he should find Matty. A few minutes before he had seen her, from his mother's window, going towards the flower-dike alone, forgotten by all. He followed her through the garden, past the young hemlocks, by the Guelder rose-bushes, to the enclosure where Bessie was enjoying for the last time the delights of freedom. Yes, there the girl stood, close to the fence, both arms clasped about the neck of the mare, who was rubbing her head against the shoulder of her former mistress.

She did not hear Otto's step. It was only when the mare raised her head with a snort that she turned and looked at him, her face no longer pale and tearful; no, the roses were blooming there again. The sacred instinct of love told her what her lover's errand was before he had uttered a word.

And, indeed, he did not utter many; he simply clasped her in his arms and to his heart. "My life! my love!" he repeated, and kissed her tender mouth, and the eyes that had only lately learned to look sad with a sorrow which this day turned to joy.

"Can you trust me? Are you willing to leave your home for mine?" he asked, and then the tears rushed to her eyes.

"Forgive me," she whispered, as, leaning her head upon her lover's breast, she gazed abroad at the glistening meadows, the glorious old trees, the distant western hills, and the 'motherless

church' on the moor. "Forgive me; these are idle tears. For what is my home to me without you? And will it not always be our own? But I was thinking of my father, who will, after all, be happy without me, because he knows that so many here are dependent upon his care, and because——" She paused and looked anxiously into her lover's eyes.

"And because——?" he repeated. "Go on, my child; there must be no secrets between us."

She nestled closer to him, and whispered, "Because my father knows how I shall strive never to allow any dark shadow to fall across your dear life, across our future."

He silently bent his dark head down over her golden curls and clasped her close. This moment, recalling the bitter past, brought with it a sharp pang; but with the pain came a blessing,—the ripening of the fair fruit of a perfect sympathy between two hearts. In the midst of the solemn earnestness of the moment the bell in the courtyard rang out its summons.

"Good-by, Bessie. *Au revoir!*" cried Matty, tossing a kiss to the beautiful creature, who was stretching her neck across the hedge.

"Bess is my first gift to you, my darling," said Otto, as they walked away, his strong arm about the waist of his fair possession. "I will duly educate her, and when you are my wife you shall ride her



every afternoon under the stern supervision of myself or of my friend Quitzov; of course after an hour's pursuit of historical information in the interest of the 'Family Chronicle,' for in that respect, Matty, we are still slightly illogical." She laughed lightly, and looked up in his face to say, in the teasing tone which he loved to hear, "Uncle Otto."

"Tease away!" he said, laughing too. "Uncle Otto feels very grand, and much to be envied in the possession of his treasure, which he will know well how to guard and cherish." Thus they wandered through the autumnal sunshine towards the house.

"Matty, promise me one thing,—be fond of my mother," Otto said, suddenly breaking off in the midst of his lover's talk. And on the white bridge beneath the Guelder rose-bushes she stayed her steps, stood on tiptoe, and then and there kissed him in token of her unconditional assent to his request.

The two old people, looking out of the ivy-wreathed window of the ancestral room, saw their children walking slowly across the bridge in the golden glory of the sunshine, and saw, too, the kiss that they exchanged. Then the mother first found the right way to the heart of the lover of her youth, and the words for which she had been inwardly praying since she had beheld once more, after long

years, the scene of her girlhood's happiness and of her greatest fault.

She pressed the faithful hand of the friend beside her, and a ray of youthful beauty transfigured her face as she said, with emotion,—

“I did, indeed, sin against you, Fritz; I will atone for it to your child.”

THE END.



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